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# DESIGN MATTERS

## Richard Maltby on Commercial Theaters

*Richard Maltby is a songwriter and director whose current show, Ain't Misbehavin', presently has four companies touring the United States and Canada. Ain't Misbehavin' has taken Maltby to theaters—both old and new—in several cities across the country, and he feels strongly that contemporary architects have gone astray in the design of some of our newer playhouses. Paul Sachner asks why?*

**Sachner:** Where has *Ain't Misbehavin'* played recently and what are some of the problems that you've encountered in current theater design?

**Maltby:** The worst offender was the Mechanic Theater in Baltimore, which was such a horrendous misuse of the space. The balcony was much further away from the stage than it needs to be, and more people could have been placed closer to the stage. The feeling is one of coldness. We had a hot show and had an almost impossible time warming up the audience in that theater. The place is ice-cold, distancing. At the Ahmanson in Los Angeles the way the house focuses on the stage diminishes everything that goes in there—it's almost impossible for a show to look sizable in it. And it's not a gigantic theater. At the

The feeling is one of coldness. We had a hot show and had an almost impossible time warming up the audience in that theater. The place is ice-cold, distancing.

Fisher in Detroit the theater is constructed so as to force all scenery back about three feet from the edge of the stage, which is harmful to any show that depends on audience contact. These new theaters are called barns in the trade, and that's exactly what they are: huge open spaces with no particular regard to getting a great number of people close to the stage. By contrast, the Curran in San Francisco manages to put nearly 1,800 people in an almost intimate relation with the stage. Wherever you sit in that theater, everything you see in front of you is the stage.

**Sachner:** How would you compare old and new theaters on Broadway in terms of the way their design affects the production of a play?

**Maltby:** In the old Broadway houses your eye essentially takes in the stage and all the elaborate decoration is kept to the side. The Majestic, for example, is a very large spectacle theater where the sight lines are perfect from every point in the house. It was built so that 1,900 people can have a full view of the stage. The Uris, on the other hand, is a new theater that diminished everything that played it until Sweeney Todd. With this show Hal Prince solved the theater's problem by building a set so gigantic that he changed the dimensions of the theater and triumphed over the Uris. Some people have criticized that show as being over-produced and I don't think that's true for an instant, because that theater has to be grafted with and defeated; otherwise, it will defeat you.

**Sachner:** Why do you think today's theater designs are so unsuccessful, compared to those of the past?

**Maltby:** This is sheer speculation, but it seems that in the past theaters were built by owner-actors or owner-producers, people with theatrical instincts. They knew what it meant to be on the stage. They were aware of the importance of audience contact and balanced that notion with the concern for the theater's capacity to make money.

**Sachner:** Another factor may be that nearly all the Broadway houses of the early part of the twentieth century were designed by three or four architects who specialized in theaters and therefore had great expertise in that particular building type. Contemporary architects are rarely such specialists.



Vivian Beaumont Theater, Lincoln Center, view of wall flanking stage. Eero Saarinen, architect, collaborator-designer for theater, Jo Mielziner, 1958-64. Photograph © Ezra Stoller Associates, Rye, N.Y.

**Maltby:** Yes, although today's architects clearly are not irresponsible. They mean to do a good job and I don't know why they do a bad job. The one that really makes you wonder is when a collaboration of the best set designer of the day, Jo Mielziner, and the best architect in the world, Eero Saarinen, resulted in such unsatisfactory space at the Vivian Beaumont Theater.

**Sachner:** What exactly is wrong with that theater?

**Maltby:** The main problem is that wherever you sit in that theater, your eye does not focus only on the stage. You focus on the stage, plus your peripheral vision focuses on two huge walls almost exactly the same size as the stage. Compare that with the Shakespeare Theater at Stratford, Ontario, where the only thing you can see from any seat in the house is the stage. Maybe Mielziner and Saarinen neglected to consult a director or an actor when they were designing the Beaumont.

**Sachner:** Do you think that the design of a theater affects the audience's reaction to or enjoyment of a play?

**Maltby:** Yes, the relationship between the audience and players at older houses is part of the magic of Broadway theater. I think that's why people are so terrified over the potential loss of the Morosco and Helen Hayes, two 1,100-seat, straight-play theaters which are a pleasure to play. The Morosco in particular is considered to be one of New York's gems and its loss would be tremendous. Any promise that the new theater replacing them will be wonderful is almost certain to be broken, as the record of recent theater-building in New York will bear out.

**Sachner:** In order to go back to the values that contributed to successful theater designs of the past, what are the basic issues architects should be addressing in the design of today's theaters?

**Maltby:** We've just gone through a period where, for some reason, we're supposed to keep drama out of architecture, where things are supposed to be cool and classical, not melodramatic in a vulgar way. Well, vulgar is what the theater is: a lot of people are supposed to get thrilled in a visceral and vulgar fashion, and architects don't understand that.

I think at this moment the movement toward the breaking down of the conventional proscenium stage has past. I happen to think there is something touchingly wonderful about a curtain going up. People seem more comfortable with the proscenium format and that is the case, let's go back to that. But try to make it as flexible as possible. I like the idea of a removable proscenium so if you wanted to open up the space more, you could. I'd try to get as many people as close to the stage as possible. I'd try to make the experience of walking into the building exciting and suspenseful. You have to go back to the basic impulses and ask yourself 'why does play exist? What human need is it fulfilling?' The answer to that question is the answer to theater design. You go for the heightening of experience, to give yourself a sense of humanity, to celebrate the capacity of human beings to go beyond themselves, to reveal the complexity and glory of human beings. It's a semi-religious, mystical phenomenon, and the theater itself should heighten that sense.

This is a special issue of **FEDERAL DESIGN MATTERS**. It celebrates the extensive support of cultural facilities by both the Federal Government and the private sector. With this double issue we introduce our new format and articles which we hope will stimulate your thinking. The next issue will deal with the cutting edge of design in a broad variety of disciplines. Look forward to articles dealing with Design Imperatives for the Eighties; the future of graphic design using technology, the fate of public housing, "daylighting" and interior design, the relationship between community planning and health, and issues in environmental design research.

In order to reach a wider audience with design news and ideas, we are sending this complimentary issue to people involved in design and arts activities who have not been regular recipients of **FEDERAL DESIGN MATTERS**. We hope you find this newsletter stimulating and useful. Future issues may be obtained from The Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Michael John Pittas, Director

**FEDERAL DESIGN MATTERS** presents an exchange of information and ideas related to Federal design.

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## Culture in Kuala Lumpur

*Although we might not think of American Embassies as cultural facilities, to our friends abroad this is often the case. Frequently, the entire cultural expression of the United States is seen through the design of our Embassy and its International Communication Agency facility. The Foreign Building Office works closely with the American architect responsible for the design as well as with officials in the country involved to insure a proper balance between contemporary American expressions of design and local stylistic traditions. The history of the design of joint Embassy and ICA facilities at Kuala Lumpur illustrates this process.*

The program established for the United States Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, demanded an architect willing to deal with local building practices and extensive requirements imposed by the Foreign Building Office in Washington in the name of security.

George Hartman of Hartman-Cox accepted these challenges with gusto. Most compelling was the problem of how to join the American Cultural Center of the United States International Communication Agency with the United States Embassy. The former exists to attract the local population with library access, exhibitions, lectures, films and other popular programs. The latter, the Embassy proper, is primarily an office structure, and many Embassy functions are not accessible to the public.

The program specified that the American Cultural Center and the Embassy be designed for security purposes, yet be separated in terms of both function and public access. Hartman's solution was to split the building into right and left sections, joining them by means of a controlled and secured lobby. Lobby guards can control and limit access to the Embassy proper while overseeing the public's approach to the Cultural Center.

As designed the building is most secure at the back and at the top. It was impossible to bury the largest function, the 4000 sq. ft. Communications department, so Hartman decided it would crown the structure. The lower three office floors are accessible to some Malaysians while the top two floors are not. Each level is its own secured unit: primary office corridors are on the exterior along covered balconies. However, inter-office linkages allow total communication within the confines of Embassy walls and believe it or not, if necessary.

Security's priority demands that rigorous attention be paid to specific safety-related design elements. However, the risk issue may be quietly introducing another unspoken question: how to design buildings not only reliably secure but also attractive enough and graced by sufficient amenities to entice foreign service officers to a given post. Two items deemed essential to the daily satisfaction of workers at the post were on-site parking and an attractive cafeteria conducive to congeniality. Hartman managed to combine parking with the program-stipulated service drive and utilized an arbor to provide shade and



Embassy and International Communication Agency  
Hartman-Cox, architects, under construction.  
Embassy and ICA with joint lobby between.

screening for the cars. The cafeteria overlooks the garden and opens to terrace-swing.

Hartman balked at the thought of imposing a stark, modern structure on a lush green, park-like site populated with Modernist style low-rise houses. He looked both to local building tradition and to local weather conditions for clues to the proper design. Since it is never really hot in Kuala Lumpur, the sun being blocked by a constant haze and the air being cooled by frequent rains (it rains 3-4 inches in a half hour), a typical Malaysian building has no windows. There are openings for cross-ventilation, but no glass; the only closures are shutters.

Typical Malaysian buildings have tile roofs, overhangs and rafter balconies. Hartman-Cox adopted the sloping roofline, which provides shade and rain protection for the balconies, and the tile roof—but made the tiles of concrete. The architects decided to "do as the natives do" not only in terms of design details but also with regard to construction methods. The concrete framework was filled with brick rubble and plastered, providing thick walls to prevent penetration of the sun's heat. The windows are operable.

According to George Hartman, the design process worked, as the Foreign Building Office stated it would. He made several visits to the site, he was able to talk with the staff at the post, and by being in Washington he found that his access to personnel at both FBO and ICA helped tremendously in designing a building which would satisfy both the demands of Washington and of the local work force.

Whether the building, once built, turns out to be as good as it now appears, only time and considerable use will reveal.

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## An unlikely Cultural Giant



Recreation Center, Ft. Polk, La. planned with the help of the new Design Guide.

With the creation of the volunteer army in the early seventies it became necessary to re-evaluate the quality of army life which in turn raised questions about the design of military installation buildings, particularly the army's leisure-time cultural facilities. As architect Hugh Hardy phrased it: "Once the volunteer army began to compete with colleges to attract young people it became important to build military campuses instead of drill fields."

Through the efforts of the Office of the Chief of Engineers and the Construction Engineering Research Laboratory, Robert Shibley, an architect with the Corps, was able to initiate two creative programs attuned to improving military architecture and thereby military life, and—perhaps more importantly—making the Corps more responsive to the needs of individuals as well as to the constraints of budget and regulations. Shibley, together with a group of dedicated Corps employees, not only wanted the Corps to build more aesthetically and functionally appealing buildings, they also wanted to give individuals at the particular military installations the type of facilities they required.

The Corps grappled with this challenge: how do we pique the imaginations of those for whom these cultural facilities will be built so that they will want to maximize their influence on their buildings' design? Once a new or improved facility becomes a possibility, how can their needs be translated into realistic design criteria which an architect can creatively use?

Two kinds of publications resulted from these concerns. First, a series of *Design Guides* were written by Robert Shibley and other Corps employees in conjunction with architectural firms as renowned as Hartman-Cox, Plaffier, and Hartman-Cox. These Guides can assist both laymen and design professionals; they present an exhaustive collection of vital matters to be considered before each planning decision is made. Furthermore, the Guides help the lay people understand the connection between the program requirements they will establish and the buildings which will result.

However, these guides are based on what is realistic to expect, both in budgetary and human terms. The *Design Guide for Music and Drama Centers*, for example, cautions the personnel who will use the new building that "the extent is to make them want to contribute their knowledge to the programming and design of their facility."

The second publication is entitled *Preparing Functional Requirements* and is due to be published this year. It is calculated to involve the people who will use the new building, the intent is to make them want to contribute their knowledge to the programming and design of their facility.

"An architect cannot proceed without your help," they are told: "Your role is essential in achieving a successful project." However, they are by no means given carte blanche; individuals are admonished to be realistic, and this theme permeates the entire presentation. For example, they are told that "the equipment tabulation should not be a wish list." They are encouraged to answer this key question: what information might help a designer in understanding how my organization will be using the facility? However, they are told not merely to stipulate their needs, but to evaluate each one on a scale of relative importance: N for "absolutely necessary," I for "important," and H for "it would be helpful to have this."

The book uses straightforward, easy to understand language reducing normally complex program requirements to questions which can be easily answered. The question technique in-

volves the parties in a dialogue and stimulates a desire to answer. This book has the advantage of broad applicability: it can help work out a program for any building. The *Design Guides*, on the other hand, each deal with an individual building type: an Arts and Crafts Center, a Music and Drama Center, etc. Each Design Guide presents a few hypothetical examples showing how program requirements might be satisfied. However, these Design Guides were not intended to provide duplicable schemes to be endlessly repeated. By helping individual posts determine how to resolve their program questions and arrive at some design answers before the concept drawings are complete, the Corps hopes to save money on design changes and to produce more functional and more aesthetically pleasing facilities.

Recognizing that a very large building stock already exists to support the Army, Shibley determined to make both the *Guides* and the *Functional Requirements Book* available to the improvement of existing facilities, as well as to the construction of new ones.

To date few new cultural facilities have been built with the aid of *Design Guides*. The Arts and Crafts Center in Ft. Stewart, Georgia is one that functions well in plan, but, "it's not a wonderful place to be," says Shibley. On the other hand the Recreation Center in Ft. Polk, Louisiana is so attractive that its acclaim may aggravate displacement. Its open, flowing, multi-level spaces encourage interaction among those participating in differing activities and make it a popular place to be: over 40,000 people have used the Recreation Center each month since its dedication. Although the open, multi-level spaces attract people and in that sense function perfectly, they do require extraordinary acoustical solutions which were not completely carried out. It is challenging to build cost-effective buildings which put human needs into the equation, yet the *Design Guides* cannot guarantee results. Committed, sensitive architects and engineers must oversee each project, carefully monitoring its design and construction.

Unfortunately the exciting methods developed by Bob Shibley and the Corps are not in common use. Charles Moore, architect, and Lawrence Halprin, landscape architect, have used community and citizen participation to great advantage. Perhaps other institutions can learn from these and the Corps' efforts and experience and begin putting the users into the design process at the very start of a project, whether Federal or private. The Corps' experience to date suggests that such involvement actually saves time and money while helping to make better places for people.

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# An Opinionated Museum-Goer, Richard Serra

*Richard Serra, born in 1939, is among the major American sculptors. In addition to the large-scale sculptures for which he is probably most acclaimed, he also does drawings, films, videotapes, and oil-silk canvases "paintings." As an avid museum-goer, Serra has visited hundreds of art institutions around the world. FDM asked Brenda Richardson to explore museum design issues with him.*

**Richardson:** Over the past decade or so the design of American museums has been dominated by only a handful of major architects—Philip Johnson, Louis Kahn, I. M. Pei, Marcel Breuer, Edward Larrabee Barnes, Kevin Roche, Robert Venturi. As an artist, what is your opinion of the general caliber of the architectural design of these buildings?

**Serra:** Most architects who design museum buildings respond primarily to a given specific program which generally deals with the functions of a museum in a very limited way. Some architects are more sympathetic to artists' needs than others. I think those who are more sympathetic are the architects who have a genuine appreciation for art, namely, Johnson and Kahn. There are other architects who seem to me to be basically self-serving and essentially patronizing to the artist, who tend to rely on rhetoric and the socio-political umbrella of populism. I've always found those egos suspect. On the other hand, I would never criticize an architect like Frank Lloyd Wright because he was satisfying the needs of his own creativity with a candid, the-artist-be-damned attitude.

**Richardson:** Should a museum building itself be a work of art?

**Serra:** I don't think there is any possibility for architecture to be a work of art. I've always thought that art was non-functional and useless. Architecture serves needs which are specifically functional and useful. Therefore, architecture as a work of art is a contradiction in terms. For museum design, the problem is rather simple: some architects are sympathetic to the needs of the art object and some are not. All too often architects focus on the audience for their architecture rather than on the audience for art. I think it's important to remember, too, that the design of museums reflects the larger programmatic needs and priorities of the institution and recently those priorities have not

I don't think there is any possibility for architecture to be a work of art. I've always thought that art was non-functional and useless.

fallen in favor of the art object. For instance, The Museum of Modern Art (New York) is currently expanding and restructuring its spaces. In looking at the plans I noticed that the largest unencumbered space in the finished building will be allocated to the cafeteria. Every other space is broken up by columns or partitions. Accordingly, the potential for display of large-scale sculpture at the Modern in the future has been precluded. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated example. The East Building of the National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.) has been heavily criticized for its allocation of the primary spaces to the public and the leftover spaces to the art. Museum administrations establish the priority of hamburgers and holdovers. Architects don't make these decisions independently.

**Richardson:** How would you advise museum administrations and architects to go about better filling artists' needs in their museum programs and designs?

**Serra:** I think architects who design museums need to spend more time with what is current in art in order to understand that there are people working today whose art, in central conception and form, has nothing to do with rectilinear box structures. For the most part, architects are still designing museums from the perspective of the nineteenth century. The character of the architecture seems most commensurate with the needs of the artist when the architect does the least to divide up the building, to fragment the spaces.

**Richardson:** I gather then, that both as an artist and as a visitor to museums you would prefer a purely functional structure with no artistic pretensions of its own, designed to house neutrally the works of art you hope to experience privately.

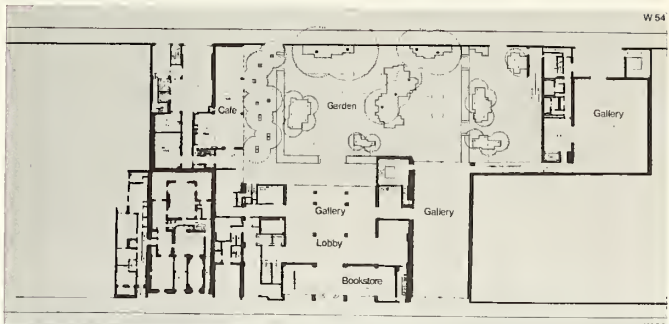
**Serra:** That sounds like a definition I could probably agree with. I would like museum space to be as neutral, open, and flexible as possible so that the artist can structure and redefine the space to adapt to specific needs. There needs to be optimum flexibility in every aspect, from lighting to walls to floors. Once the architect imposes a limitation, the artist has to work within that limitation—and that kind of restrictive spatial definition just doesn't seem well suited to the art of most people who are working now.

**Richardson:** What is your favorite museum?

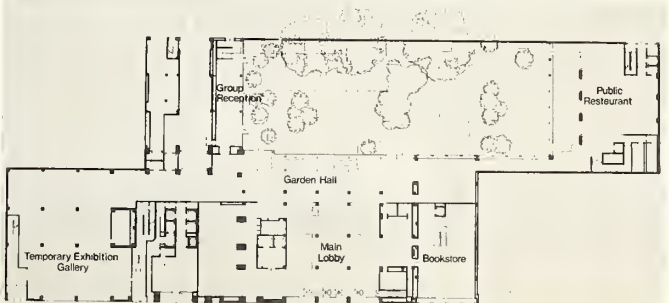
**Serra:** I suppose my favorite museum is the Prado. Different museums fulfill different needs that I have in terms of my own work at different times.

**Richardson:** Does your love of the Prado have anything to do with the physical plant, or is it solely the art holdings that attract you?

**Serra:** In terms of viewing pictures, the Prado's terrible lighting and cavern-like ambience are poor. But I think what it comes down to is that my initial viewing of Velázquez gave painting another definition for me. So I'm drawn to the Prado just because those paintings are there in that room, presented with a lot of space and vertically arranged in a way that permits you to stand back and look at them individually. The Rijksmuseum gives you a good look at Rembrandt in much the same way. Although I never really thought about it before, I guess the museums that I like are those that provide the opportunity for an in-depth look at an individual artist's work as it develops, so that one can go there and have a dialogue with the problem—and the complexities of given works in an artist's development. In much the same way I like the Frick, the Phillips, and the Barnes Foundation. Those very private museums, and the nature institute, one-to-one relationships with works of art seem to avoid the turnstile, postcard, museum-without-walls, popcorn, showmanship, leftover space, airport mentality of so many other museums. Edward Barnes' Walker Art Center



Museum of Modern Art, Existing Ground Floor Plan



Museum of Modern Art, Proposed Ground Floor Plan. Cesar Pelli and Assoc. The existing temporary exhibition galleries total 7,250 square feet. The new temporary exhibition space will total 15,600 sq. ft. on two floors for a 115% increase in total area. The largest clear rectangle unobstructed by column in the existing temporary space measures 57' x 73'. In the new temporary exhibition spaces, the largest clear rectangle will measure 39' x 77'.

(Minneapolis) is a good museum, too, with its big spaces and big ramps, and without a great number of partitions.

**Richardson:** What museum or museums do you find most sympathetic to the display of your own work? Aside from the socio-political issues, do you find a private domestic setting more aesthetically responsive to your work?

**Serra:** It really depends on the kind of work and the nature of the spaces. The urban works need a large number of people to complete their content. I feel strongly that these sculptures could not be in a park or in a desert. They need the interaction of people. There are other works which probably relate very crucially to a continuum within the tradition of sculpture and for that reason it would be better if they could be placed in contexts that could illuminate those relationships. Ideally, I suppose, I would prefer to have a private space in a public situation, but I know that is a luxury that can only rarely be afforded to a single artist's work.

**Richardson:** In museums almost by definition and with rare exceptions, however, your work will be situated in close conjunction with other artists' works, many presumably of a sensibility quite alien to your own. Do you find that a distracting factor?

**Serra:** I really don't think that's a great hindrance. If given a choice, I would of course rather have my work seen in isolation, that is, with other examples of my own work. But I certainly have no hesitation about having my work hung next to other artists' work that someone else deems relevant.

**Richardson:** Would you prefer to have your work displayed in natural or artificial light?

**Serra:** I would rather have it all seen in natural light—everything—sculpture, drawings—everything. I almost always work in natural light, either outdoors or in the studio, and I find that kind of light the most satisfying for my works. If I light the works at all, say, for an exhibition, I light them in such a way as to avoid all direct light and all shadows. I usually light either the walls or the floor in order to give reflected rather than direct light. With the exception of certain artists who use reflective surfaces, I think for the most part sculpture really doesn't need to be spot-lighted. When I think of the Archaeological Museum in Athens I remember just a flood of light on the early Minoan work, which lets you see the grain of the stone. I know there has to be some provision for nighttime viewing and filter protection for fragile materials. Those technical issues aside, however, I would absolutely rather see all art in natural light.

**Richardson:** What are your feelings about wall color and texture for the display of art?

**Serra:** I think any wall that's neutral is preferable to a wall that seems to say "I am a particular color or surface." Although it happens to be what most people use, I do not myself have any overt preference for white walls. In fact, in some sense white walls become almost tyrannical, purist, or authoritarian. The Stedelijk used gray linen to cover the walls, and that is perfect

and totally neutral. I am certainly not interested in yellow, blue, purple, or striped walls. Any material texture like brick or stone can be a serious functional problem, and usually requires inventing a veneer cover of some sort in order to get the work in place. I have also encountered problems with curving or undulating walls with my very large drawings which have to be installed absolutely flush to the wall.

**Richardson:** Intelligently to the museum experience in most cases is a relatively large number of visitors, most of whom are basically uninformed about much of the art they are seeing.

Would you rather have art displayed in that public context or without explanatory text or audiovisual materials?

**Serra:** Without. I believe that if people have a need for further information about a work of art—beyond who did it, the title, date, medium—there is always sufficient material either in the museum itself or from other sources.

**Richardson:** You clearly do not like prepared texts or audio-visual materials to supplement the viewing experience. As a visual materials to supplement the viewing experience. As a curator I occasionally prefer that our museum guides refrain from giving tours of particular objects, because I want to encourage the viewer to experience the work of art privately and without external clues in order to come to some personal understanding of its meaning.

So many museums now seem to have to predicate their survival on the lowest common denominator for their program commitments. Museum design can only parallel those survival priorities.

**Serra:** I certainly agree that you can explain a work away. The doubt, anxiety, and frustration that a viewer might feel in confronting a work and then carrying that confrontation home with him, could be the stimulus that would bring him back not to the same experience but to another experience of the work. Certainty and specificity might just smother any potential for individual fantasy in learning to enjoy works of art. We all grow up with works of art, and I think we grow up with them quite privately. We don't really need that private fantasy we have about particular objects—whether in memory or in anticipation of seeing them again—re-structured for us.

**Richardson:** Quite often your sculptures are placed in public places with a great deal of traffic. Do you find it objectionable to have your work used essentially as background for passersby in airports or bank lobbies or corporate offices?

**Serra:** I have avoided all those contexts. I have never put a work in a bank; I have never put a work in an airport. I have never put a work in a corporate structure. I have never put a work in any structure whose morality would define the work,

that is, where the work could be seen as referring back to the morality of its context. For about the last ten years I have tried to place works in "detached spaces" which are not encumbered by juxtaposition to specific buildings. In terms of public commissions, of which there have not been that many, I try to stay on top of the situation, so that I can deal with all of the external and internal contradictions that inevitably arise in these situations. I am very displeased when analysis of the work of art as sculpture is overlooked or dismissed in favor of consideration of its so-called larger social or political implications.

**Richardson:** Do you think that the structure of the art museum in America today relates more to the corporate morality as you define it or more to the detached public setting?

**Serra:** Probably more to the corporate mentality. By definition, institutions *institute* and conserve and, as such, they are involved with notions of permanence. Permanence implies value, and notions of value tend to reinforce the trustees' thinking about the potential of money. In that sense, most museums are capitalist safe deposit boxes and basically akin to bank structures or corporate structures. Even within those limitations, some museums still manage to exhibit creative work which is at the very edge of definition. But the more historical museums tend to reinforce a conservative interpretation of art.

**Richardson:** Given that to be true, how do you feel about putting your own work into that context?

**When the architect's ego impinges and his design interferes with the nature of how art can best be viewed, real problems result.**

**Serra:** No two situations are ever the same, and even the contradictions are always different. You have to deal with each context as it comes up. It hasn't been a problem for me. I can't think of any museum in which I've shown where the context actually defined the work. Many people think that changing the frame of a painting or putting it in a different room in the museum will somehow alter the work. I've seen the same works in different museums and I could still carry on essentially the same dialogue with the work in each respective setting. In these instances the art object slips at its boundary. If the work points to other issues relative to the larger structure, then the work is probably created in order to criticize that structure. I am interested in restructuring the perception of a given space through the way my work organizes the space, or in restructuring the apprehension of my work in terms of its own boundary.

**Richardson:** Do you think that museums are doing their jobs in terms of providing a relatively responsive and functional environment for works of art?

**Serra:** In terms of both the structure of the museum and how institutions program their exhibitions, I think they are usually about thirty or forty years behind the times for the contemporary artist. For the public, I suspect museums are probably doing a better job now than ever before. More people are visiting museums. But to make that happen, museums have often had to go against the nature of what would be a better condition for art. There is so much hoopla necessary for the survival of the institution, to make the museum seem to be a potential place for people to dip their fingers into the cultural pie. I'll never sure anymore when I go to the Whitney whether I'm seeing Arnold Schwarzenegger flexing his muscle in the hall or another Edward Hopper retrospective, either one of which is essentially a sales pitch to bring in the masses. So many museums now seem to have to predate their survival on the lowest common denominator for their program commitments.

Museum design can only parallel those survival priorities. I would hope that architects could accept the fact that they are architects and are *useful* as architects, and could thus stop flitting with the notion of being both artist and architect. When the architect's ego impinges and his design interferes with the nature of how art can best be viewed, real problems result. I would think that architects would be both tolerant and supportive of the kind of invention that occurs in art and would come to understand that they are basically in a service profession, not an artistic endeavor.

## Jazz Artists Agree On Outdoor Pavilions

Patricia Willard



Concord Pavilion, 1975, Frank O. Gehry, architect, Sasaki Walker Associates, landscape architects; Christopher Jaffe & Associates, theatrical and acoustical designers.

Three eminent jazz artists agree emphatically that acoustics are their primary concern when performing outdoors anywhere in the world. Louie Bellson is a premiere drummer/percussionist, composer and bandleader who, in 1933, conceived and designed the original two-bass-drum set now used by drummers internationally. Kenny Burrell is a distinguished instrumentalist, composer, and leader of his own musical group. He plays both amplified and acoustic guitar and is a member of the music faculty of the Center for Afro-American Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles. Sarah Vaughan is a musician and one of the most respected singers in jazz. She has a remarkable vocal range and unique improvisatory style.

Interviewed individually, each responded without hesitation that his or her favorite facility is the Concord Pavilion at Concord, Ca., 28 miles northeast of downtown San Francisco. None of them has ever been approached personally by an architect, designer, or planner, and all are convinced that artists definitely should be consulted.

Every architect and designer of pavilions for the performing arts has a responsibility to go to Concord and experience what has been achieved.

Burrell and Bellson prefer the shells with musicians and audience sharing the same roof as acoustically and psychologically beneficial. "Performances outdoors frequently are flawed by echo, wind, insects, the distance and resultant separation of the audience from the artist, inclement weather, airplanes and automobile horns," Burrell explained. Even though distractions are inherent in many outdoor festivals, once an artist has captured the attention of his audience, listeners outdoors are not less dedicated or appreciative than indoors. Moreover, outdoor sound has special qualities. It spreads. Landscaping affects performance in that it alters sound. A grove of trees at

the perimeter of a pavilion, for example, will make the music sound different than it would in barren open space. Concord's sound is the best I know. My hope, however, is for even further research and development of innovative acoustical applications and/or materials which will project a balanced sound, neither too loud nor too soft, reflecting the artists' musical concepts. Bellson, whose Big Band Explosion has performed with symphony orchestras in great concert halls as well as in stadiums and the center of the racetrack at Santa Anita, loves playing outdoors but is adamant that "baseball fields are ridiculous for anything but baseball games!" He has come to insist upon acoustical excellence for the presentation of his music.

He finds the design and system closest to his criteria at Concord. "Every architect and designer of pavilions for the performing arts has a responsibility to go to Concord and experience what has been achieved. My band definitely gives its best performances at Concord," Bellson proclaimed. "The sound is so good that we recorded our last album *Dynamite!* there—outdoors! I like the sound on that record better than the ones we've done in the most sophisticated recording studios. For concerts, Concord has no rival. Every performer can hear every other performer at all times. Each member of the band can hear himself as well as the rest of the band. Singers can hear their accompaniment. Musicians can be aware of every vocal nuance. Unfortunately, this is a relatively rare phenomenon. Best of all, every person in the audience can hear the music exactly as it is played and is meant to be heard. There's not one bad or inferior seat, even on the grass. At Concord, when I'm not playing, I am out in the audience enjoying the other performances and merrivelling at the great sound."

Whether his audience occupies formal seating or is scattered on the grass does not affect his performance. Burrell averred, although it may influence his programming.

"Oscar Peterson, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Pearl Bailey (Bellson's wife), Ray Brown... a lot of major artists... have said they would rather perform at Concord than at any other venue," Bellson continued, "because of the sheer delight in being able to hear themselves onstage and getting that great reaction from an audience which is as comfortable as the star."

Vaughan concurred. She headlined the Concord Pavilion's inaugural concert in 1975 and is happily anticipating her appearance there this summer. After sound considerations, she is concerned with lighting. She would like to see both stage and dressing room lighting upgraded to the specifications of Concord and wishes that the intense heat of stage lighting could be minimized. However, she doubts that this can be accomplished. She remembers the old Robin Hood Dell at Philadelphia, Pa., and Wolf Trap Farms in Virginia as oppressively hot. "Burrell sees climate control as essential; 'If the temperature is freezing cold, I'll be concerned first about my guitar and the instruments of my musicians, and I don't relish playing for people I know are shivering.'"

If the temperature is freezing cold, I'll be concerned first about my guitar and the instruments of my musicians, and I don't relish playing for people I know are shivering.

Dressing room, rest and guest facilities are satisfactory at most pavilions built during the past decade. Bellson, Burrell and Vaughan confirmed. Older structures usually are inadequate in this respect, and some, Bellson reminded, have no dressing rooms at all. And, he adds he would like to travel without an old-fashioned-laundry-supply of clip clopkins to anchor the band's music against disruptive winds.

The Concord structure employs a multiple channel, assisted resonance, 7,000-watt sound system, fabricated by Spectra Sonics. Kliegl Brothers, Western Corporation installed the lighting system which incorporates 400 overhead spotlights and 270,000 watts, controlled by a computerized console. Seating capacity is 8,000—3,500 tiered seats under the roof and informal seating for 4,500 on surrounding grassy slopes.



# Moyrhan Takes On The G.S.A.

Robert A. Peck

Presently, private architects are screened and commissioned to design government projects under procedures established in the "Brooks Bill." This act requires that architectural and engineering firms be selected upon the basis of "demonstrated competence and qualification." For each proposed project, an agency head is required to evaluate various firms' "current statements of qualifications and performance data" and to "conduct discussions with no less than three firms regarding anticipated concepts and the relative utility of alternative methods of approach for furnishing the required services."

In a July 21, 1976, report to the Congress the General Accounting Office reported that "discussions" with firms seldom went beyond the firms' presentations about their past projects. GAO went on to say, "discussions dealing only with A/E (architect/engineer) firms' past accomplishments do not, in our opinion, afford the Government a sound basis for evaluating proposals for a new project."

The "discussions" are open to the public but rarely noticed. Final selections are made by in-house boards and, from the GAO report, it is clear that the selections are made on the basis of past reputation and credentials of firms' members. The system seems to work in favor of those firms that look good on paper, that promise to deliver safe, noncontroversial designs, and that government officials know and like.

The system, as it now operates, does not ensure that Federal commissioning of design professionals is based on a competition of present talent and creativity, rather than on past friendships and personnel. In nearly every other major selection of material or personnel, the government adheres to policies and procedures that encourage choice from a range of competing proposals advanced by private enterprise. Selection of architectural services is a singular exception to this practice. Architects have long been familiar with a competitive selection system, but the Federal government has not used it extensively since the turn of the century. Design competitions require architects and associated designers to submit the concepts and approaches they would use if given a commission. I reject the view, and I doubt the Moyrhan bill, that construction costs are the only small percentage of the long-term costs of operating a building and doing business in it. It would be short-sighted to emphasize small differences in immediate costs and so forego possible design ideas that could save large sums in the long run.

Design competitions provide a forum in which designers, responding to the competition "program," engage in a dialogue with the client. Competitions bring widely varying ways of meeting specific building needs. They provoke public interest in the design "debate" reflected in the various entries—and they allow the public and the press to see and judge for themselves the materials presented to the competition jurors.

Design competitions in Federal practice are as old as the Republic. The White House and Capitol building in 1792, the Smithsonian Institution, Washington Monument, and Library of Congress in the 19th Century were all the subjects of design competitions. In 1893, with help and backing from the American Institute of Architects, Congress passed the Tansley Act, which provided for the hiring of private architects for specific Federal projects—a departure from the prevailing in-house design policy—but only through a congressional committee. That act, repealed in 1912 following a congressional committee finding that in-house design was less costly, the Ellis Island Immigration Station in New York harbor, the New York Custom House (still serviceable and now undergoing GSA renovation) and over 30 other buildings were constructed nationwide.

In 1974, a Task Force on Federal Architecture comprised of distinguished private architects and public officials under the aegis of the National Endowment for the Arts, recommended as one means of improving government design, that "design competitions, properly financed, . . . be used to encourage public design concern and demonstrate government receptivity to new ideas and people." Officials of the Arts Endowment testified before a congressional committee in 1977 and again in 1979 that the agency continues to hold that view.

Opponents of design competitions generally state that they are costly and time-consuming, both for client and designers, cumbersome and troublesome to manage, that they often reward spectacular, but unbuildable designs, and that they impede the establishment of an essential "dialogue" between client and designer. But other architectural experts suggest that most of these objections can be overcome by carefully drafted competition rules and procedures, some borrowed from European countries where competitions are commonly used for public projects. In West Germany, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries, public competitions are more nearly the rule than the exception. The Royal Institute of British Architects has promoted their use in government projects, and has pioneered several innovative competition procedures that could provide useful models.

Successful competitions have been conducted in less than sixty days, in a time of competition called "charrette," for example, typically only a few members of each of several firms are brought together (often at the proposed project site). In a few days to a week, they analyze the building program, meet with local citizens or officials, and produce a tentative design plan or model.

As long as the time allowed is kept reasonably short, and the presentation techniques limited to uniform, simple ones, large or wealthy firms have no inherent advantage over small or struggling firms. Talent and analytical abilities provide the advantage under these procedures.

Competition submissions need not be complete designs. One criticism of competitions has been that once a design is adjudged the winner, those involved are afraid to revise it, even if, on further, detailed examination, changes appear called for. The purpose of competitions should be to find the designer who demonstrates the best understanding of the government's needs and who shows the greatest promise of being able to fulfill those needs with the highest quality design. In

late last year, Senator Daniel Patrick Moyrhan introduced, on behalf of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, the committee which oversees the General Services Administration public buildings program, the Public Buildings Act of 1980. That bill (S.2080) proposes a complete overhaul of the public buildings program. Among other things, it establishes policies on locating and financing Federal buildings. One of its more significant purposes is to improve the design of Federal buildings, and its most controversial initiative is a requirement that half of the major GSA construction and renovation projects make use of design competitions to select the project designers.

order to satisfy this purpose, it is not necessary to require competitors to carry design concepts very far beyond their first articulation.

Criteria for judging submissions should be written so as to discourage selection solely on the basis of spectacular design renderings. Competition programs can stipulate that designs be buildable within a specific dollar, life-cycle, or energy budget, and that consultants be hired to evaluate submissions and screen out those that do not fit the budget. Application of these criteria, of course, usually requires the submission of relatively detailed design proposals.

Where submissions suggest the selection of a designer who appears to lack the technical experience needed to see the project through to construction, he or she can be required to affiliate with a more experienced firm. This is a common requirement in West German competitions; some West German competition winners, instead, move into government offices to work with experienced in-house staff. Identification and nurturing of such design talent is an investment in the future quality of the nation's buildings.

Some architects have complained that participation in competitions costs them a great deal of money, that even if they win a prize they fail to recoup their investment, and that there is small chance that they will win a prize at all. Despite these complaints, competitions seem to attract a large number of participants. Moreover, architects and other designers, under the Brooks Bill and non-competition selections in the private sector, are not without expenses in making presentations of past work and entertaining potential clients. The Moyrhan bill contains safeguards that will eliminate much of the excess cost to the profession. Limitations of time and presentation techniques alone can curb most of these expenses. The bill also requires that competitions be managed in such manner that the stipends and prizes cover at least the costs for fair labor and materials of each firm's participation. Cost data on competitions compiled by one expert indicate that one-half of one percent of design and construction costs is sufficient to warrant a competition. Competitions ought to be conducted on both large and small projects. In the past, competitions were considered appropriate only to monumental projects. Experimentation with competition procedures and selection of unknown talent may well be more easily accomplished on more modest building programs.

The quality of the program document for a project is the most important single determinant of success or failure of the design process. The program bestands even more critical in a competition—programs too vaguely written are so open to different interpretations that there may be no fair equal basis upon which submissions can be judged; voluminous, detailed programs, on the other hand, can stifle design creativity and lead to arguments over, and judgments based on, minor details rather than overall design quality. By conducting a program of regular competitions, in-house government staff can become proficient in writing programs and conducting other aspects of fair and effective competitions.

It is true, of course, that one can get good designs through direct commissioning and that design competitions occasionally misfire. But the opposite is true also, and it is particularly true in the government, where direct commissions by committee tend to seek out the unambitious and unadventurous. A competition procedure is the only way that a search for design talent and imagination can be institutionalized. And, in the bureaucracy, if you do not institutionalize a policy, you have not achieved it at all.

David R. Dibner, FAIA

S. 2080 is a comprehensive approach to the development of public buildings. As such it is rich in opportunities that were previously not available to the General Services Administration and we applaud its intent.

Who could fault such goals as providing Federal buildings

—Bear lively testimony to the dignity, enterprise, vigor and stability of the American Government.

—Embody the finest contemporary American architectural thought and reflect architectural traditions.

—Preserve and advance the nation's legacy of architectural excellence.

—Ensure the highest productivity and efficiency of Federal agencies and their employees.

—Enhance commercial and cultural conditions in the vicinity of public buildings.

—Provide Government services throughout the United States in locations convenient to the people.

In addition to raising our sights for the design and construction of public buildings, S. 2080 sets a policy for long-range planning.

The bill requires that the Administrator of GSA submit a five-year plan to Congress for accommodating the public building needs of the country. This allows GSA to identify and develop its space and technical requirements, consider them in conjunction with fiscal constraints and policy objectives to determine what will be needed each five years, and then present a yearly program to Congress.

It also allows us, through a new funding mechanism, to select a site and develop the preliminary design in advance of the prospectus development.

Once we've done that, we can more accurately estimate the cost of the project. The military has been doing this for years. The bill also gives us the right to borrow money from the Treasury, much like a mortgage to finance new construction.

Another major advantage of the legislation is the recognition that the Government's best interests are served by owning our buildings rather than leasing them. As a result of our past policies of discouraging Federal building, approximately 50 percent of our employees are now in leased facilities. Our rent bill for next year is estimated at over \$600 million. That's quite a pile of rent receipts without any equity build-up. In fact at the current rate, we'll be reaching \$1 billion in rent receipts by 1985!

To alleviate this situation, the bill proposes that within 10 years of its enactment 60 percent of the Federal employees be housed in Government-owned buildings. Ten years later, the requirement would be up to 75 percent.

And there are other assets in S. 2080. It gives GSA the mandate to conduct research and undertake demonstration projects; it encourages the rehabilitation of public buildings of historic significance and it speaks to the conservation of energy. That's the good news about the bill. Here's the bad.

The bill gets too specific in one area. Unfortunately, this area is important to the success of the program. Title VI of S. 2080 dictates that competitions be used for 50 percent of the public building construction and renovation projects expected to cost no less than \$5,000,000. "The competition shall last no longer than sixty days . . . and . . . shall elicit from each firm preliminary design concepts only."

We take strong objection to this mandated approach for the following reasons:

—It seems to divorce "design" from other aspects of project accomplishment in the selection of an A/E (architect/engineer).

—It sets dollar and number thresholds that are very low and would be costly in time, money, and personnel for both the Government and competing firms.

—Design competitions should be employed only on a selective basis, for projects of a complex or special nature.

—The present system of A/E selection is based on total firm competence (including design ability) in accordance with the Brooks Bill procedures.

We are joined by the architectural and engineering professions in these objections. These professions take the position that the Government, the public, and private practitioners will be best served by maintaining the current selection procedures for architectural and engineering services. They suggest that the selection of architects and engineers through design competitions does not provide for the effective exchange of ideas between the user and the architect or engineer, that in fact, the exchange is actually reduced because of the limitations which competitions place on communication between the user/client and the architect or engineer.

Further, it does not seem to recognize that today's design results from the integration of client requirements with the necessity for energy efficiency, harmony with the site and surroundings, handicapped accessibility, provision for commercial spaces and all of the other requirements the creative response to which results in great architecture. This takes time, thought, and dedication. A sixty-day sketch pad isn't enough. Further, what about the firm's capability to deliver on time, within budget restraints?

GSA is committed to providing outstanding facilities for Federal workers. We welcome any assistance which S. 2080 will lend toward that accomplishment. However, when both client (GSA) and Architect/Engineer feel that the mandated competition route is not consistent with achieving this goal, should not the proposed legislation be responsive to these views?

# Palaces Survive Despite All Odds

FIFI Sheridan



Mabel Tainter Theater, Menomonee, Wisconsin. Photograph M. Russell



Atlanta Fox Movie Theater

Often described as dream castles, many movie palaces and houses of the early 1920's were inspired by great classical architectural treasures of an earlier era. The grand foyer of the now demolished Tivoli in Chicago was a replica of the *Chapelle Royale* constructed from Mansart's designs at Versailles between 1696 and 1710. The interior of the Loew's 72nd Street in New York was patterned after the Great Tower of the Pagoda Wat Ching and the Temple of Nakhon Wat in Thailand, and the now demolished Roxy in New York, the Cathedral of the Motion Picture, had a Gothic arch, twisted columns similar to those from the baldachino in St. Peter's at Rome, and elements adapted from Santa Maria Novella in Florence.

At the time of their construction, between 1915 and 1930, many movie houses were part of mixed-use commercial development, incorporating professional and retail establishments in the same building complex as the theater, and were conveniently located along major commercial streets.

In 1938 the government decided to prohibit the same company from producing and distributing a given film and then showing that film in company-owned theaters.

When movie producers owned their movie palaces they were scrupulously maintained. With divestiture, with the advent of television and with the population shift to the suburbs, many theaters became less popular and were allowed to deteriorate.

Today, many of these structures qualify as treasures—filled with elaborate ornamentation that would be difficult and exorbitant to replicate. Much to their credit, a number of communities across the nation have had the foresight to recognize these jewels, whether they be grand palaces like the Spanish Baroque Ohio Theater in Columbus or the smaller legitimate theaters like the Moorish style Mabel Tainter in Menomonee, Wisconsin.

Among the issues to be addressed when considering a renovation or adaptive reuse project are: location, feasibility for reclamation or adaptive reuse, financing, public support, sound and creative management, booking and scheduling practices, maintenance and preservation problems. Of these, location probably has the greatest impact. As commercial patterns continue to evolve, certain cities are finding their downtown properties becoming valuable real estate. In some areas "progress" is threatening old theaters. A prime example is Chicago, where a small group of concerned citizens are working to convert the Chicago Theater into a performing arts center. The beautiful Chicago Theater is one of nine Loop theaters threatened with demolition.

On the other hand, it was hoped that when the St. Louis Symphony renovated the former St. Louis Theater into the beautiful Powell Symphony Hall in mid-town, the area would witness a revitalization. Despite tremendous efforts, the rebirth is not yet being experienced and the symphony is promoting "new and improved parking and lighting for the 1980-81 season."

If a theater is to be saved, a feasibility study demonstrating what would be a practical, probable use for the structure, must be evaluated early in the process. If a performing arts center is being considered, will the stage depth be sufficient, the acoustics and sight lines good? If the existing stage depth is insufficient, can an organization function for several years on the existing stage until funds can be raised and plans designed for extension?

Sometimes feasibility studies reveal the harsh realities of life, i.e., some cities no longer can utilize all theaters in their communities as revived performance centers. This realization can stimulate creative thinking about reuse. Two successful examples are the handsome jewelry exchange in Los Angeles, formerly the Los Angeles Pantages, and Fiorucci's, the elegant boutique in Beverly Hills, formerly the Beverly Drive Theatre in Beverly Hills.

Financing, of course, is a major concern. During their heyday, weekly movie theater incomes of \$10 a seat were not unusual; annual revenues at this rate could reach \$1.5 million for a 3,000 seat house with the building conceivably paying for itself in a year—a good return on an investment.

Today, many theaters are being converted to performing arts centers by not-for-profit organizations; thus a well organized, effective fund raising committee is essential.

Which leads us to the question of public support—the crucial element. Miracles have been performed by small groups, who despite all odds, demolition permits, financial crises, and an uninformed public, have stayed with projects to see them become landmarks in their cities. Commitment is their strongest asset, as is love for what they are doing. In one particular theater of 2,897 seats, one person is carefully removing all of the original brocade panels and draperies to wash, mend and rehang.

Management must be creative to seize market opportunities. Some communities have learned that elaborate lounges can be rented out for functions, without imposing on the use of the theater proper.

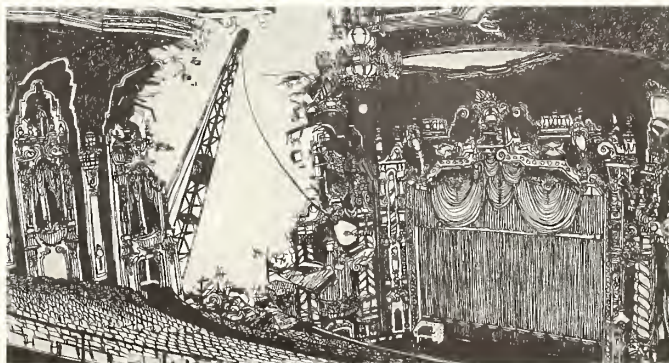
Bookings must reflect a variety of audience preferences in order to develop a loyal following and to insure maximum attendance.

Maintenance in buildings that have one central heating system for the entire building tends to require installation at an early stage of a modern, selective heating system to reduce operating costs.

In searching for ways to save a theater, some communities have found that not all issues have pleasant resolutions. The handsome and wonderfully ornate Indiana Theater in Indianapolis presently is being converted into three separate theater spaces by the Indiana Repertory Theater. To accommodate this reuse, much of the elaborate plaster in the interior has been demolished, to the dismay of many preservationists.

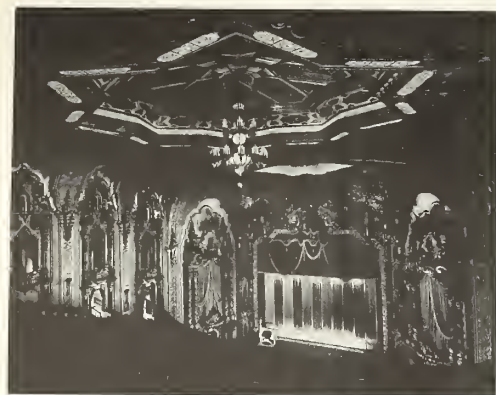
In Washington we are grateful for the Kennedy Center as a performing arts center. But its blandness cannot provide for the thousands of children and adults what the grand houses did and continue to do—allow them entry into a world of elaborate elegance or fantasy. How many of us as children, during a touring performance of the Met at the Atlanta Fox, when not fully understanding the opera, allowed our thoughts to take flight and imagine ourselves as one of the Moors behind the castle walls. Seeing what someone's interpretation of a Moorish castle was, helped us understand *Onkel Tom's Cabin* a bit better when we were older. How many of us pretended to be royal when stepping down the elaborate stair or standing under the colored ceiling of the Chicago?

Dreams were encouraged by these experiences. And dreams are an essential release and an essential creative experience in determining how we lead our lives and how much we enjoy theater. These structures introduced thousands of people to design features not normally found in their everyday lives. We mustn't permit the loss of too many of these marvelous expressions of our own American architectural heritage.

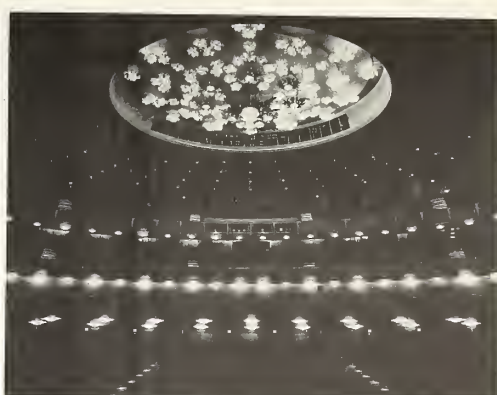


What might have happened





Ohio Theater, Columbus, Ohio



Opera House, Kennedy Center, Edward Durrell Stone, architect. Photograph by Jack Buxbaum.

# Tom Sternberg Prefers Movie Palaces

Tom Sternberg, close associate of Francis Ford Coppola and of the producers of *Apocalypse Now* and *The Black Stallion*, tells Carol Field that he thinks most people carefully consider the design, sound system and ambience of a theater before going there to see a film.

**Field:** When you go to see a film, do you choose carefully the type of theater showing the film? Do the theater surroundings make a difference to your enjoyment of the film? Do you think the audience knows or cares?

**Sternberg:** I always try to choose to see a movie in a good theater, and when the public has a choice, I think they respond the same way. In fact, there's clear evidence that some theaters—restored old ones—consistently do a better business, and the reason is that people really like to go to them. If you show the same movie in two different theaters, and one is a restored building, the public chooses that one by a strong margin. Some of the public's choice of theater is also a function of the new sophistication about sound. The whole Dolby phenomenon has to do with a higher consciousness of sound quality and that comes from home hi-fi's. People are taking that new knowledge and preference with them into movie theaters, so they choose Dolby over mono sound systems and go to theaters where it's available.

**Field:** Are old movie palaces good places for audiences to watch modern films?

**Sternberg:** They're great! More and more people want to go to events, and a movie is an event or at least a mini-event. People all over the country now really like to go to movies in restored palaces, although it wasn't long ago that they were considered white elephants that were much too big. It seems as if the rehabilitation of old movie palaces is a response to a need for theaters with more seats. You can divide them up into a few small places simultaneously showing four or five movies, but I think there's a new realization that we need larger houses too. Restoring those old palaces is a lot cheaper than building new ones, and of course they have all sorts of ambience.

**If you show the same movie in two different theaters, and one is a restored building, the public chooses that one by a strong margin.**

**Field:** How can we involve creative people in the design and redemptive use of movie theaters?

**Sternberg:** First of all, it's an economic issue. Most of the old theaters that are being restored today are owned by young people whose views are very different from older theater owners—mostly chains—who wouldn't restore these buildings be-

Restoring those old palaces is a lot cheaper than building new ones, and of course they have all sorts of ambience.

cause they don't think the economics of operating them are as favorable as the ordinary theaters they're used to. The young guys fixing up old movie palaces love the places; that's the first step. They're combining their love and money. They find design professionals with the same commitments. Nowadays, even municipalities are getting into the act—look at the Paramount Theatre in Oakland and the one in Atlanta. It's a sign of people's recognition of the glamor and romance of the event. They really respond to those places.

**Field:** What do you predict for the future of movie theaters once movies become available on cassettes and can be viewed on a home screen? Will the glamour of films be lost if they are always viewed at home?

**Sternberg:** The information on movie cassettes and their impact on theater attendance is fragmentary, but what we know indicates that the home audience will be a supplementary, new one—not the same one that already goes to the movies. People who love movies will keep going to theaters.

# From The Hollywood Studio Point Of View

Two movie executives, Peter Saphier at Universal and Mark Rosenberg at Warner Brothers, tell Susan Dworsky that "there will always be first-run movies and second-run cassettes."

"Movies are an event. People will always want to go out to the movies."

This sentiment has become a talisman for feature film makers today. Based on the one hand by new technologies that bring movie viewing home on videotape cassettes, and by the burgeoning Fee-Vee (Pay TV) market, movie makers are determined to maintain control of their entertainment product. Despite the intrusions of cable and cassettes, going out to the movies will continue to be one of the most important popular entertainments. "As long as you're good, they'll go see you," states Peter Saphier, Vice President in charge of Production at Universal Pictures.

There will always be first-run movies and second-run cassettes.

"People want to go out at night into a darkened theater with a big screen," echoes Mark Rosenberg, Senior Vice President at Warner Brothers. "There will always be first-run movies and second-run cassettes."

The most important new direction in theater construction recently has been the building of the "plexes." Four, five and six-plex theaters are not uncommon now. In Texas there is even a fourteen-plex. It's hard to imagine that many movies appearing simultaneously in a medium-size city, let alone one

theater! These new plexes are located in malls or heavily trafficked areas. Theater owners hope to reduce operating costs and to create habitual theater-going patterns among workers and shoppers. Even older movie palaces that date from the '30's and '40's are undergoing similar renovation. Grauman's Chinese, that redoubtable baroque entertainment pagoda on Hollywood Boulevard, has now become a three-plex. To recreate older theaters, the move is to place movie theaters in a concentrated area where a support network of restaurants, bookstores, bars and late-night shops make going out to a movie a substantial event.

"Even waiting in line is a trip," says Saphier, who admits to standing in line for over two hours in a drizzly drizzle to get his kids into *Superman*. "People were running in and out for coffee and food, exchanging newspapers and gossip. I remember the line more than the movie."

"People like waiting in line," amends Rosenberg, "because they know they're waiting for the hottest ticket in town. They're anticipating a thrill."

Theaters should meet the audience's physical needs—comfortable seats which avoid placing you directly in line with someone's head, an up-to-date sound system and a good print. But both Rosenberg and Saphier stressed the importance of the make-up of the audience itself in choosing a theater.

"Who's watching is what matters," says Rosenberg. "Seeing Foxes in Burbank on a crowded Saturday night is a heck of a lot different than seeing it in an empty theater on a rainy Tuesday in Westchester."

While movies ordinarily play well in small to medium-size theaters, there are occasions when a huge or otherwise extraordinary theater might be advantageous. To see 2001 or

*Apocalypse Now!* in the Cinerama Dome makes it a special, theatrical event. But how many films on that scale are being produced now?

"Not many," concedes Saphier. "Jennings Lang created a new process called Sansurround for his film, *Earthquake*. It is a sound process that recreates a sense of shaking and fear by accommodating a decibel level that no theater up to this time has been able to handle."

Installed in from 300-400 theaters, the process was used again for *Midway*, but is not applicable to most ordinary films. Lang is currently working on another new process for his upcoming *Lightning* which will create the illusion of a lightning bolt actually striking the audience.

Remember, what gets people out of their homes is what they're going to see on the screen. Once the lights go down, that's all that counts.

Theater design remains responsive to the needs of the movie-makers and the distributors, but in the final analysis rests with the movie-goers themselves. The Dolby-zing of theater sound systems, taking place in about 75 theaters per month, is the direct result of audience demand for more sophisticated sound.

"Remember," emphasizes Saphier, "what gets people out of their homes is what they're going to see on the screen. Once the lights go down, that's all that counts."

# Repertory Distinguished From Commercial Theaters

*Adrian Hall has been Artistic Director of the Trinity Square Repertory Company in Providence, Rhode Island, since its founding in 1964. In addition to his directorial responsibilities, he has written and/or directed four works for Public Television, guest-directed at the Guthrie and Yale Repertory Theaters and collaborated on a film script for a five-hour television series based on the life and work of Edith Wharton. Trinity Repertory performs in a former movie palace in downtown Providence. Robert Freeman asked Hall to talk about theater, architects, and theater architecture.*

**Freeman:** Do non-profit theaters have certain design requirements that commercial theaters do not: for example, shop space, rehearsal space, costume storage?

**Hall:** Yes. Most of the commercial theaters that we know are truly looking house operations. A costume designer comes in, designs, goes back to his or her own shop, and the costumes are brought into the theater and tried on. A non-profit theater or rep theater of course has to have wardrobe or fitting rooms; there have to be places for dyeing and washing, places for changing things, cutting rooms, and most of all there has to be storage. What happens to the costumes of a lavish production of *King Lear*? In the commercial world, the unions insist on their being cut up and disposed of; they can't be handed down to the rep theater, of course. But in the institutional world there are storage space requirements that the commercial world doesn't have.

What theater consultants really do is consult about their particular pets and grievances. So if you've got a lighting designer, what you end up with is a very abundant lighting situation.

**Freeman:** On a percentage basis, how much of Trinity, for example, is given over to things that the audience doesn't see?

**Hall:** I'd say roughly half of the space of the building is given over to auxiliary facilities in an institution such as ours.

**Freeman:** In your experience with other repertory theaters, have architects taken these needs sufficiently into account?

**Hall:** Well, no. What happens architecturally is that architects are concerned with the design and the look far more than the practical needs of the organization. The architects seem to be giving this country some kind of European tradition of elaborate lobbies and space facilities. There's a million miles separating architectural understanding of theater needs. Moreover, theaters are often unable to voice and express those needs.

Today the lighting designers and set designers have really moved into the area of theater consulting. What they really do is consult about their particular pets and grievances. So if you've got a lighting designer, what you end up with is a very abundant lighting situation. Specialized consultants don't really take into consideration the dressing room problem or the toilet facilities or the endless kinds of little things. What has to happen is this—they ought to become indigenous to the problems and artistic goals of the particular organization.

**Freeman:** From what I understand, a triumvirate planned Trinity Theater: yourself, Eugene Lee, resident designer, and Dick Kuehl, architect. Is that the model you're recommending for others who are working to create a new theater?

**Hall:** It certainly is, if you care about the spatial relationships between the audience and the actor. For so long in this country, anytime theaters were being built, what people talked about was the coloring of the seats and what the auditorium looked like and the chandeliers—and to its day people still write architecturally about the decoration of theaters. So I would say yes, that it is a good combination, architect and designer and artistic director.

If the architect is really strong and opinionated, and the theater people are really unsure, then you can be frozen into a situation such as happened to the late and dear Nina Vance in Houston, with her Alley Theater. She went to the foremost kind of architect and unfortunately she ended up with a frozen space. Frozen in concrete.

**Freeman:** What do you mean by frozen?

**Hall:** In vaudeville you came from the wings, you didn't come from backstage. What they did at the Alley was create those in concrete. That seems like a very good solid thing—there was enough height and enough width, and yet suddenly you were locked into an exact space and there was no breaking out of it. You see, theater originally started out as a much freer arrangement, with the audience perhaps wandering around the event or looking up at the event in the back of a courtyard. It was really in the 19th century that that monstrosity began of a performer rigidly held from loe to foot facing the person, also frozen, sitting in a locked-in space with two arms on the seat. If you go so far as to have a whole block of seats facing one direction, and the performing space facing another direction, then if you put a frame around that playing space, that's what I mean by frozen.

**Freeman:** Having said all that, why did you choose to go to the Majestic Theater as opposed to one of the abandoned factories in Providence?

**Hall:** Actually, there are certain things out of 19th century architecture that we can say with pride are wonderful. I love the fact that we have what we call front offices, administrative offices that are right up front, not in the back of the building or in the cellar or in the attic; they're right there, and they do business with the merchants every day. We have a movie palace lobby so that no matter when you wander in, whether to go to the box office or to stand and read literature in the lobby, you soak up a wonderful kind of atmosphere of graciousness of the bygone era.

But, what I was very concerned with was creating spaces and it seemed to me there had to be two of them. In one space we put together everything that we had learned in the past. For instance, you cannot have a situation where a designer can take a set absolutely up against a back wall and

then you have no way for the actors to get from one side of it to the other. Inevitably, regardless of what you say, "My God, that's 60 feet—the designer will never go back that far"—they always do. We decided that if we were ever given a chance to create a backstage we were going to have a passage inviolate: there was no way the designer could break through that passage.

**Freeman:** So, in a sense you froze something for the actors?

**Hall:** That's right. That was out of experience.

Upstairs we realized that if the challenge of how you confront the audience was to continue, there had to be an extraordinary lack of architectural imposition on it. I know from time to time people have said it looks like a black box—and it should. What Eugene and I actually wanted was a space that you can go both down and up in. In order to do that, we found, the entire space had to be trapped. We had to put in a sub-floor which could be broken down but which was always there. This means that you can create a set at Trinity Square where you can go further down if you need to. If you need the devil to rise out of hell, then you can always do that regardless of what else you have done.

The architect would have said, "You don't do this architecturally: I'm just not going to leave an unfinished space here." We didn't have that kind of argument because we barely had the money to do the kind of crude, basic things that needed to be done.

**Freeman:** Let's generalize somewhat—what would a perfect non-profit theater design look like and why?

**Hall:** The fact that we're still building theaters in basically the same way that we built them 2000 years ago—that's good, but we have to take out the improvements. The division of "this is only for the audience" and "that is only for the actor," "that is for the shop personnel," etc. It's a much more communal kind of event than we allow ourselves to believe.

I have no objection to the fact that most of what we call box sets have the french doors up center and the fireplace down right and the sofa in the middle with the coffee table and

cigarette lighter, but we've had that for an awfully long time and I say unqualifiedly that that no longer creates a living room atmosphere—it did 50 years ago and even back to the middle of the 19th century when so-called realism first began to rear its ugly head and Mr. Zola and Mr. Ibsen and Chekov began to write about realistic things. A hundred years later a man named Walt Disney took it up and really popularized the idea that there is a plastic equivalent of everything in the world. If we only have a building for one kind of play then the theater is also limited.

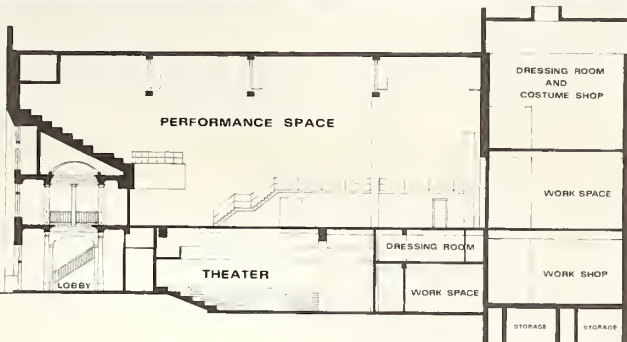
**Freeman:** Do designers successfully resolve acoustical problems?

**Hall:** No they don't. It is true that an amplified voice is not a natural voice—it's not the same thing. You can deal with amplified sound but it is another added element that instead of creating reality distracts from reality. So what we get is further and further away from some kind of real and direct confrontation between the audience and the actors.

**Freeman:** As you know, I have a definite preference for reusing old movie theaters, both because of their wonderful, almost goppy, architecture, and because they are so "of the city," not set apart on some acropolis, even if it's just West 66th Street.

**Hall:** I agree. I love the interaction. People come in, whether they're buying tickets or not, whenever they visit the city. Of all the buildings available, including churches or even prisons, I'd say the *crème de la crème*, the most desirable, are old movie theaters. You get the greatest dividends from former movie palaces.

One final thought: there must be more communication between people who have built theaters and those people who are going to be building theaters. There's a general feeling that "I don't want anybody else—Gordon Davidson or whoever—telling me how to build a theater." But, on the other hand, Gordon has been through the building of a theater and might very well have something to add. People who've lived in theaters should be asked what they'd have done differently. After working these several years you learn what does work and what doesn't work.



Trinity Square. Renovated in 1973 from designs by Providence architect Richard Kuehl, Resident Designer Eugene Lee, and Hall. The facility retains its elegant original two-story lobby. The old auditorium has been cut in half horizontally to create two theaters—a 300-seat playhouse downstairs and a flexible space above which can seat up to 500.



The Alley Theater in Houston, designed by Ulrich Frenzen in collaboration with the Alley Theatre staff. Photograph © Ezra Stoller Associates, Rye, N.Y.



# André Previn Analyzes Concert Hall Design

André Previn began studying music in Europe. By his mid-teens he was a jack-of-all-musical trades at the MGM Studios in Hollywood, arranging, orchestrating, composing and conducting scores for films. He went on to win three "Oscars" for his Hollywood musical activities—but in the early 1950s conducting studies with Pierre Monteux convinced him that he wanted to make his way in the musical world as a symphony conductor. He effectively turned his back on Hollywood in 1960 in order to pursue a career as a conductor. Since 1976 Previn has been Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. He has conducted and toured with most of the major orchestras of the world. Martin Bookspan asked him to discuss the characteristics and qualities of symphony halls from the vantage point of the conductor's podium.

**Previn:** I'll be happy to give you my thoughts about concert halls—but first you must understand that I know absolutely nothing about the science of acoustics. I tried to read a book about the subject once, and when I saw that I really couldn't comprehend even the first page, I gave up!

**Bookspan:** What I'd like to have from you are impressions of the physical environment that contribute either positively or negatively to the making of music. For example, does the ambience in fact have anything to do with contributing to a successful concert from the performer's point of view?

**Previn:** The ambience makes an enormous difference! For example, there is something about Carnegie Hall in New York that produces in you the feeling that you are about to go and do an important concert. Whether the reason for that is a presidential one or not I don't really know. The hall with the most ambience for me is the Musikverein in Vienna; and it's not just the historic ambience of, say, Brahms, having sat there and listened to performances of his music, it's the fact that the place quite obviously was designed, built, lighted and meant for the purpose of making music there.

**Bookspan:** Are you aware at all of climate control in a hall?

**Previn:** Very much. It comes down to the ludicrous thing of either being freezing cold on stage or very, very hot. For me—and for most players—the worst thing is to be too hot. I think that very often the design of air circulation on a stage is faulty, causing all sorts of problems—including raising hell with the intonation.

**Bookspan:** What about backstage facilities in most concert halls—dressing rooms, rehearsal rooms and the like. Is there enough thought given to those things by architects?

A perfect acoustic in a hall is about 75% luck and 25% planning.

Not quite on the point, but something which I want very much to get on the record is the fact that I am a firm believer in wood and I find that all the halls that I enjoy the most are practically 100% wooden halls.

**Bookspan:** What do you think of the adaptation of old movie houses and their conversion into symphony halls?

**Previn:** Sometimes those can surprise you. However I'm more convinced now than I was twenty years ago that a perfect acoustic in a hall is about seventy-five per cent luck and twenty-five per cent planning.

**Bookspan:** What are your favorite halls—and why?

**Previn:** For all the reasons I've already listed, my favorite halls are the Musikverein in Vienna, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Philharmonie in Berlin—which has, by the way, an icy atmosphere but which for some reason sounds marvelous, and with exemplary facilities such as hydraulic risers, wonderful backstage facilities, adequate entrances and exits, and parking lots and lights. In England I love The Maltings at St. James in Aldeburgh; in this country, Carnegie Hall, and Symphony Hall in Boston—and to a lesser degree but still excellent, Heinz Hall here in Pittsburgh. You sometimes find unexpected bonuses—wonderful halls where you least would anticipate it. I remember years ago being in Tempe, Arizona. There's an auditorium there designed by Frank Lloyd Wright which is a sight to look at—in terms of a concert hall—but which has the most astounding kind of acoustic perfection. What it's doing in Tempe, Arizona is one of those mysteries of our musical life.

**Bookspan:** What qualifies as acoustic perfection in your definition?

**Previn:** "Acoustic perfection" in not only mine but any player's definition would be sound that is as clear and comfortable on stage as it is from the audience point of view. As an example, the Royal Albert Hall in London is wonderfully comfortable to play in, everything on stage sounds balanced and quite right, but it doesn't from the audience. Now conversely I have played, as at all of us have, in dozens of halls where I come off during the intermission and say, We can't hear anything! and people say, Well, it sounds great out front. So I think "acoustic perfection" is if it sounds good both from the playing vantage and the listening one.

**Bookspan:** Do you find parking facilities or the lack of them a problem in our concert life in terms of audience turn-out?

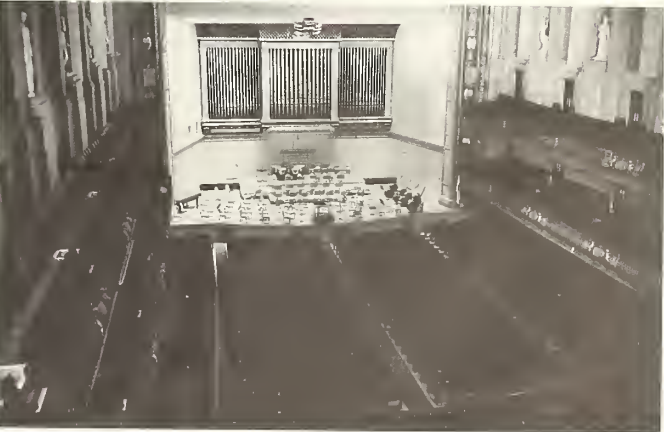
**Previn:** I don't know if poor parking facilities keep the loyal public away but I do know that in too many cities now if you have a successful box-office evening they beg you to start the concert late because people are still parking. That's something that I'm vehemently against.

You did want to know if I knew of any halls that worked as well for chamber concerts as for full symphony orchestras. The best one for me in that respect is in Aldeburgh. That is a hall big enough to accommodate great big concerts and yet is very often used for solo recitals, for chamber ensembles, for sonata evenings, quartets. There is something about that hall which makes you think that you're playing in a particularly conducive, large living room. That works wonders. There are other halls that somehow also have that same feeling, but Aldeburgh is the one that most forcefully comes to mind right now.

**Bookspan:** What is the hall in which you most enjoy making music?



Carnegie Hall



Boston Symphony Hall

**Previn:** Without any question or hesitation, the Musikverein. But let me repeat, I know nothing about the science of acoustics. What I find particularly distressing about concert hall design is what happens sometimes to a very good hall when there is refurbishing done to the non-musical facilities in it. It's fine if they leave the auditorium itself alone—if it's a good hall—but often in the misguided effort to "improve" the hall, it's "improved" into a failure. Severance Hall in Cleveland and the Academy of Music in Philadelphia were better-sounding halls twenty years ago, before they were refurbished acoustically.

**Previn:** Well there again, most of the famous halls are reasonably good in that department. I have to say that there the newer halls have made better allowances. Our hall here in Pittsburgh, Heinz Hall, is, I think, fairly exemplary. Festival Hall in London is wonderful. I think the times that we find really unusable backstage facilities are when an orchestra goes on tour and there are intermediary dates in small towns between the big cities. Then you are likely to find halls that have been converted into having an orchestral series, where there is absolutely no place to change clothes, no place to stand, no place to sit. That, I find, is among the most demoralizing things that can happen to an orchestra. There are infamous places known to all orchestras and conductors like that—Englewood, New Jersey or Seoul, Korea are two that come to my mind immediately.

**Bookspan:** What about a circumstance that happens more frequently than it should: rehearsing an orchestra in one hall, and then playing the concert in another that has totally different acoustic properties?

**Previn:** That is absolutely anathema! That unfortunately happens in a great many places; it used to be the case in London all the time, but now London does have an excellent rehearsal hall whose use is shared by all the orchestras there. Here in America there is a rule in many orchestras that precludes acoustical rehearsals while on tour—and that makes life very difficult at any given tour concert in an alien hall. Players and conductor are through the first piece before all of us get used to what that hall does to the particular sound. I can't guarantee that if you rehearse a concert in the hall in which it will be

played that it will be a good concert, but I can almost guarantee that if you don't, it won't be.

**Bookspan:** In terms of on-stage acoustics, have you come across places where acoustical shells have solved some of the problems of architectural deficiencies?

**Previn:** Now that's a question that I am genuinely not qualified to answer. I can say that in general I have not found a shell to be the answer to what is intrinsically a bad acoustical hall. But then I may not have worked with those shells that are supposed to do it.

**Bookspan:** What about lighting, both on stage and in an auditorium itself?

**Previn:** There again, in those halls which are multi-purpose halls, which have conventions, conferences, lectures, wrestling and concerts, the overhead lights on stage are very often even spaced wrong for the musicians. An orchestra, after all, requires a lot of space up stage and down stage, and there are whole rows which are left in the gloom because of the lighting arrangement above. There again, modern halls have conquered that pretty much. But I can't tell you how many times on tour players have come to me and said, "I simply can't see." To try to remedy that with spotlights creates another set of problems because then blinding light is sent directly into the faces of other players—and that can destroy a performance.

By and large, though, those halls that serve as home base for our great orchestras present few if any lighting problems for the players on stage.

**Bookspan:** What annoys you most and what pleases you most about the design of concert halls?

**Previn:** Here again I'm going to have to duck the scientific elements or the luck—good or bad—involved in the acoustics. But what has to be taken into consideration is that there's enough room on the stage for the musicians not only to sit but to play comfortably. Very often stages are simply too small and the string players are cramped and uncomfortable when they have to draw a full bow arm, or the trombone players can't extend the slide properly, or the percussion players are backed up on top of each other. Those are brutal conditions under which to have to play

# A Tale Of Two Cities

## Minneapolis Opera builds a new home

Joanna Baymiller

The Minnesota Opera Company now faces what might be its biggest artistic challenge: building itself a new home. Well, not exactly "new." The Opera's performing hall will be built to incorporate three of the oldest buildings in Minneapolis, vintage stone and brick structures dating from 1854 (a year before Minneapolis was founded). These buildings are expected to be donated to the company by Minneapolis arts patron Louis Zelle, after which they will be substantially rehabilitated for their new uses.

Because this will be only the second opera company in the country to build its own hall (the only other is the Metropolitan), anticipatory tingles are running down the spines of the Twin Cities arts community. What kind of facility will it be?

Like the Opera itself, it will be a blend of contemporary and traditional forms.

The proposed design has been evolving from both the opportunities and the constraints posed by the site and by the buildings themselves. Located along the city's historic Main Street and fronting on the Mississippi River, the buildings are virtually guilt-free, and structurally fragile ones at that. They are adjacent to the St. Anthony Main development, a former-mattress factory turned into a classy restaurant and retail complex, and directly in front of a 12-story sawtooth shaped deluxe residential tower being completed this summer. As a result, the architects will have to accommodate the Opera's program for a 75,000 square foot building with minimum intrusion in either direction.

The design commission (and the list of both physical and historical constraints) went to Hammel Green and Abrahamson, Inc., a Twin Cities firm with a reputation for design excellence and a repertoire of over a dozen performing arts facilities to its credit. Curt Green, project principal for the Opera as well as most of the firm's previous performing arts work, describes the proposed design concept as having a simple vocabulary of basic materials and forms, predominantly brick and glass, so the building is sympathetic to the existing buildings of Main Street. Rehabilitation of the structures known as the Limestone, Upton, and Iron Works buildings, will largely involve reuse of the facades, which will be carefully disassembled, marked, and rebuilt.

Inside, tradition is to be replaced by a series of artistic innovations which meet the needs of a company that performs traditional opera but is best known for introducing innovative operatic forms.

In early planning "charrettes" (brainstorming sessions), the Opera established its principal requirement as intimacy. That dictated the size of the hall, 1,201 seats, and influenced the decision to experiment with a combination thrust/proscenium stage that neither the Opera staff nor the architects have seen anywhere before. The thrust is shallow—extending 20 feet beyond the proscenium—and asymmetrical in shape. The auditorium will be fan shaped with a 50 degree spread, and seating for about 750 people on the main floor and 450 in the balcony. To retain intimacy in the auditorium, no seat will be more than 70 feet from the stage. A 52-foot fly loft is planned, and the proscenium will have wings and a sliding device to adjust the proscenium opening.

The Opera has concluded that this type of stage best suits their kinds of productions. A key point is being able to see facial expressions, as well as to hear voices. Traditional opera makes music and lavish scenery the dominant experience, but to a company like this one that gives all its performances in English, understanding the language becomes very important. It makes being close to the performers a necessity.

"We feel the theater must have three-dimensionality," explains H. Wesley Bak, one of two Co-Artistic Directors. "If it doesn't it is lighting every entertainment trend in the business." A position paper developed by the company's artistic staff describes this rationale.

The very technology that has created spectacles with which we can't compete has also created a demand for intimacy and comprehensibility on the part of our potential audiences. Having spent their lives in contact with television and movies, they have become accustomed to performer close-ups and ease of comprehension. If we build performance spaces which dwarf the performer and demand costly scenic devices to fill them we are doubly at odds with our goal. The bigger the scenic space behind the singer, the more expensive it is to fill. And once filled, the more the space and scenery will reduce the intimacy of the performer's contact with the audience."

And for a company that wants to promote contact between the audience and the actors/singers, that intimacy is crucial. Another key requirement, says Music Director Philip C. Brunelle, is a "warm, clear acoustic."

"What we want is the ideal acoustic for opera, one in which there is a balance of sound between the music and the performers." That factor led to another decision that will place the orchestra pit largely below the stage, allowing it to protrude in front of the thrust portion enough to allow a conductor visual contact with the performers and the audience. In part, that decision reflects the company's broad repertoire and the associated variety of needs.

"This year our largest production required 30 performers and a 44-piece orchestra, and our smallest 8 performers and an 18-piece orchestra. We have to have a sound resonant enough for either."

In addition to the thrust/proscenium stage and the peek-a-boo pit, the new theater is planned to have side lofts for choruses, actors, or antiphonal music, and vomitory ramps extending from the dressing rooms below the auditorium to the front of the stage so that there is ample flexibility for theatrical experimentation. In addition, the new building will contain dressing rooms, lounges, rehearsal rooms, storage areas, and offices. The company's administrative offices, costume and scene shops will remain in their present location in St. Paul. The proposed solution seems tailor made (which in fact, it is) for a company with an interest in opera of all periods and a commitment to artistic experiment that often involves taking risks. Ironically, the inspiration for the new hall came from the past. Commenting on the company's desire for a facility that would allow the performance of works with unconventional orchestrations, Philip Brunelle cited a surprising precedent.

"Consider the Bayreuth," says Brunelle, referring to the German opera house that served as a kind of model for Minneapolis Opera. "When Wagner built his own opera house, he put the pit under the stage rather than in front, so the singers could be heard."

If plans proceed as expected, construction could begin late this summer, and the singers will be heard in about 18 months. At that point, audiences and critics can judge for themselves.



Downtown Winston-Salem showing Winston Square surrounding the city's first downtown park, theaters, studios, offices will be housed in renovated buildings



The Limestone, Upton and Iron Works buildings will have their facades preserved. The Minneapolis Opera will use new interiors, designed by architects Hammel Green and Abrahamson, Inc.

## The Arts Make Winston-Salem Click

Whitney Jones

When the Moravian settlers of Winston-Salem arrived in the Carolina wilderness in the 1750's, they set out to plan an ideal town to be called Salem, the place of peace. From their mother community, Herrnhut, Germany, the Moravians received a town plan depicting a medieval city in the shape of a wheel with four gates at each of the four directions, but rejected it as impractical for their wilderness hilltop. By the very fact that they contemplated the plan, however, they established a tradition for considering the improbable and the ideal in city planning.

The latest example of this tradition at work is a \$16 million project to revitalize the center city of Winston-Salem by bringing the arts back to the core of the city's working life. The project involves the renovation of several center city buildings into spaces for arts, recreation and entertainment activities, with the idea that the arts will serve as a magnet to attract life, including business life, back to the center of the city.

A major element of the project is a renovated former movie theatre, an imposing 1929 classical-revival theatre, which will become the Roger L. Stevens Center for Performing Arts. It will contain a 1,400-seat theatre for concert, drama and dance to be performed by the troupes of the North Carolina School of the Arts as well as by visiting companies. The building, also includes a former hotel, of which only two floors are included in the current plan. The projected rehabilitation of the building began in 1978 with a \$100,000 Economic Development Administration-funded feasibility study which determined that renovation would provide the North Carolina School of the Arts a space for major live performances at about half the cost of building a comparable new facility on campus.

The Winston-Salem firm of Newman Calloway Johnson Van Etten Winfree has redesigned the former movie house interior to the professional standards of the arts school. The final design preserves many of the original ornamental details within a space which has been reshaped for contemporary performance needs. Funds for the \$9,276,176 project come from a wide variety of government and private sources. The remainder is being sought from major national foundations, both corporate and private.

When the Stevens Center opens in 1982, it will serve as a gateway to a "cultural block" which will include a complex of arts-related buildings and open spaces called Winston Square. A \$7 million project, Winston Square will have as its center a renovated former Cadillac showroom and adjacent textile mill (the "Sawtooth Building," named for its oddly shaped roof-line and listed on the National Register of Historic Places). The former showroom now houses the Winston-Salem Arts Council and several of its member groups (who returned as "urban homesteaders" to the building in 1978 from their former headquarters on the fringes of the city). The "Sawtooth Building," now undergoing renovation, will house gallery and small theatre space as well as spaces for artists and craftsmen. A park will adjoin the Arts Council building for a variety of exhibitions and performances; a former YMCA building is to be converted into a contemporary space for cultural and recreational activities.

Federal support of the Stevens Center/Winston Square project is being used by community fund raisers to stimulate private support, as well as to attract private investment in surrounding center city buildings. Community leaders are firmly convinced that the relocation of the arts to the center of the city will reverse the flight to the suburbs which Winston-Salem, like most other American cities, has experienced in the last three decades. The chances that the dream of a revitalized downtown will succeed are high, for, as many who have written about the project have noted, Winston-Salem has a good track record for support of the arts as central to the life of a city. The community points with pride to the accomplishments of the last thirty years: the formation of the first arts council in America in 1949; the restoration of the Moravian town of Salem (with over 50 homes restored and 100 non-conforming structures removed since 1950); the founding, in 1956, of the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA), a regional gallery serving eleven southeastern states. Winston-Salem is also proud of the transformation of a former high school campus into the North Carolina School of the Arts, of a former Kroger supermarket into the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts,

and of the former home of R. J. Reynolds into the Reynolds House Museum of American Art. This city of 145,000 also boasts three symphony orchestras, three chamber music groups, one of the largest collections of early music manuscripts in the country (housed in the Moravian Music Foundation Archives), and the oldest brass band in America (the Salem Band).

Support for the arts is community wide as evidenced by a recent study which revealed that Winston-Salem has the highest per capita support of the arts in the United States. It also comes, of course, from the thousands of individual donors who give annual support to the Arts Fund Drive, the Friends of SECCA, the Friends of Old Salem and a myriad of other arts drives.

Such support is not only a result of the continued vision of the Moravian founders but is also a result of the pragmatic belief that arts are intimately related to the overall success of a modern industrial city. As J. Paul Stich, Chairman of the Board of R. J. Reynolds Industries, says, "Our experience here in Winston-Salem affirms that a community with a strong cultural base is also strong in other respects—its economic base, its educational system, its social stability."



# Phyllis Curtin Discusses Opera House Design

Phyllis Curtin, famous soprano who heads the Yale School of Voice and Opera, is interviewed by Eugene Cook.

**Cook:** You've spent many a year and given many a performance on opera house stages all over the world. My question is: As a performer, what makes for good acoustics?

**Curtin:** The ideal acoustical situation is one in which the performer has a really fine, accurate sense of his own sound, without having to force, without having to push. At the same time, the ideal acoustical situation projects that sound into the hall in such a way that the listener in any place in the hall is hearing free, resonant tone, commensurate of course with how the artist is performing, and that he hears the fullness of the tone to its best advantage. In other words, the house should allow the tone to carry throughout and should enhance the quality of the tone.

**Cook:** So that it's both faithful, and yet somehow glorifying?

**Curtin:** Yes, I would prefer to say that the ideal auditorium is really an instrument. It becomes the ideal resonating box for performance, whether speech or music.

**Cook:** In effect, then, the singer has two resonating boxes, his or her own body with its resonating cavities, and the place in which he or she is singing.

**Curtin:** Absolutely. You have just skirted a sensitive subject—how well a performer actually releases tone; and of course that is a problem for all kinds of instrumentalists. The Metropolitan Opera, the old one, could be frighteningly only because it looked so big. There was that great, dark, cavern, and I believe its visual aspect had an instantaneous effect on the performer. He thought, "I can never fill that up." So before anything else happened, he was geared to push the body, the sound, and all the rest. Actually, the house was a very easy house in which to sing. If you sang well, the tone was carried all over that house by its acoustics. Not being an engineer, I couldn't begin to tell you how much that has to do with shape or with materials used. All of those things are factors in making the acoustical shell, but when we think about that house, it makes one think of other houses. Probably, the largest other one would be Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, and that house . . .

**Cook:** Is quite a different shape.

**Curtin:** Yes, very different. I don't know anything about the materials, nor did I pay that much attention, I guess, because the stage itself was so big, so vast, and yet there, the pianissimo, a clear, carried, carried beautifully, clearly, clearly to the very back of the house. And, of course, one's fortes vibrated like anything. It's one of the most beautiful houses in the world. Then you move from that to other big places like the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, which is a concert hall, certainly one of the greatest spaces for music that was ever made in this country. Symphony Hall in Boston has a different quality sound, nonetheless excellent.

**Cook:** You're citing, it seems to me, two different shapes—the old Met being a vertical, cylindrical shape, the Teatro Colon more of a deep, rectangular shape, the Boston Symphony Hall also rectangular, and the Academy, the cylinder again.

**Curtin:** Yes, and then we have Carnegie Hall. Carnegie Hall is an enormous house. And it's rather horseshoe-shaped, but it's still a box, rounded in its balconies perhaps; but let's talk about the old New York City Opera. That was a fascinating problem. It was not always fascinating if you got bad reviews because of it, but it had curious problem. When one was singing on stage, it felt, to the singer, absolutely wonderful. You thought you were really doing your best singing and it was reverberating all over the place. And on the stage that was true. The remarkable thing was that not much of that carried into the auditorium.

**Cook:** There were dead spots.

**Curtin:** Publicly it was noticed also. You might be singing one week at the City Opera and the next in Carnegie Hall and suddenly everybody noticed what a marvelous singer you were when you sang in Carnegie Hall, but nobody would in the same way when you sang in the City Opera stage.

That was a major problem with that house. There are other houses; Royal Festival Hall in London, for example, has a very curious acoustic to many people. It has been called dry, it has been called by others, pure. Speaking for myself, it feels like a difficult hall. You don't get an enormous reverberation, and singers have to go by feel, more than by listening to their instruments. If they listen, then they pull all the sound inside and it doesn't go anywhere. So you go by sensation. If you get a new, it's a lightning thing. You think, "Oh my, something happened, my whole voice is here." It carries beautifully in Royal Festival Hall, music is very clear, but it does not seem to have what most of us, trained on 19th-century music or the more romantic 20th-century music, like to think of as the full resonating quality of an ideal tone. That's an ideal tone before I ever sang there, was not there. It was always very happy on stage, but it's even lovelier in the auditorium. It didn't force you, and you'd discover that if you could be calm enough, the sound traveled, and you were indeed reaching the back of the house. It was a comfortable feeling. Where one really gets troubled is not so much in major opera houses where one sings frequently and gets accustomed to the sound, but in the touring line of many of us. We sing in high school auditoriums, in gyms, in propper theaters. Some propper theaters are terrible, some gymnasiums are marvelous . . .

**Cook:** And you sing outdoors.

**Curtin:** Yes, from time to time. These acoustical situations are fascinating. For instance, when you mention outdoors, I think of the Cleveland Orchestra, which has two glorious places in which to perform: Severance Hall in Cleveland and the Blossom Festival spot in the country outside Cleveland. Now, Severance Hall, before I ever sang there, was not so good, but it was redesigned, and after that, that hall became truly an instrument. Everything is given its most beautiful representation—instrument or voice—and balances from treble to bass are excellent, which means in recitals the balance between voice and piano, or voice and piano, is lovely; and the symphony orchestra is beautifully balanced. For chamber music it is clear and clean. Their big Blossom Festival spot is built on the shell principle. The stage is the bottom of the beautiful shell, and the auditorium fans out and around. It also has a considerable rake inside the theater part, in other words, it's lower and slants out.



Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, Sarasota, Florida, 1970, designed by Wesley Peters of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. Mrs. Wright chose the interior color scheme.

**Cook:** Like a megaphone.

**Curtin:** Exactly. And it is beautiful acoustically. And look at Saarinen's old Tanglewood shell, which is not nearly so sophisticated. It is a basically flat surface. There is a tiny rake in the auditorium, and it has no side walls at all, except around the orchestra. It does have various shapes over the orchestra that have been added to enhance the sound, but that's an extraordinarily fine auditorium for some 6,000 people. On the other hand some halls are really dry. Again, I don't know why that is, sometimes perhaps it's the materials inside. A very plushy place, with plushy seats, plushy rugs on the floor, areas in walls and panels that are made of soft materials, is deadly there is no surface from which the sound can bounce.

Every instrument has a resonating surface. It's the same in a hall; sometimes the sound won't travel any place, and there's nothing in the world the singer can do about it. We get frantic. We push the instrument. The violinist digs into the string. The singer uses all his musculature and breathing yet the sound still goes nowhere.

There is no way a performer can change an acoustical situation. This is something very important for students to understand. They keep saying, "Oh, gee, it's such a hard hall I'll have to strain to do this and that." But what they gain in decibels cannot possibly make up for the harm they do to themselves and their built-in instrument.

**Cook:** Do you find that acoustical aids help?

**Curtin:** The little clouds that are added to halls and the acoustical shells that are dropped in like fishnets around auditoriums can be useful. Apparently they make different surfaces from which the sound can travel. A sound wave can be bounced from one place to another, or it can be stopped as in starkly simple halls.

I think that's one of the reasons for the beauty of sound in Baroque halls—where there is lots of statuary. This you find in Viennese halls, and in many old American movie theaters. We'll talk soon about my experience in the Bronx in the old Paradise Theater, where there are columns and shapely figures, recesses, domes. All these things take sound and really play with it and keep the sound waves moving. Apparently, when we get into a more ascetic kind of hall, we find ourselves in trouble with sound.

**Cook:** What you say of Vienna is true of old houses like La Scala, the Fencine in Venice, and places like that, isn't it?

**Curtin:** You would never build an opera house and theater and think about putting a shell in it or else you've gone way off the track in the first place. There are some great halls which are occasionally used for recital. For instance, Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires often is used as a recital hall. When this happens, a small shell is put onto the center of the stage, it does not look bad and it greatly enhances the sound of one instrument with piano in a house which was basically never designed for that. An artist I know, a singing artist who was my first teacher, Olga Averbach once said about recitals in Carnegie Hall that to do a recital in Carnegie Hall was to put a Persian miniature in a twelve-foot oak frame, standing back twenty yards and saying, "Look at the beautiful detail!" Acoustical shells can be useful. They can also be gruesome by being too enclosed, by seeming to swallow up the performer as in a cave, and by being ugly to look at. This also will disturb the performer.

**Cook:** How do you feel about amplification?

**Curtin:** Amplification is becoming more of a factor, particularly in halls which have not turned out well. Amplification, to my way of thinking, is a denial of what virtuoso music-making is. A singer should be able through his own resources, concentration in his body and his instrument to captivate the audience. In the end, he only depends on dials, it's all wrong. Just think, if you can, of pop singers and how they look with that microphone always in hand. It's an extension of the arm, and of the voice, and indeed of the personality. More and more composers are interested in electronic music. So we're already getting into things that depend on amplification. For concert artists and for opera, I think it's a distortion, because communication comes directly from the performer to the listener. As soon as you introduce loudspeakers, the communication is coming from the artificial speaker. I find myself looking at the speakers and not at the performer.

Today, if you make a recording, it becomes an engineer's art. I really want to hear opera the way it is in an opera house.

I'm not interested to hear it the way it is on current records, where the singer is standing in my living room, or, as has happened in less scrupulous recordings, the "star" is enhanced with every electronic aid in the world and the other characters are not, so that the one voice is seemingly more magnificent than the others.

Many contemporary composers are writing music in which they specifically say, "without vibrato." They're put off by singers' "wobbly" sounds. Today's acoustical engineer may design a hall, and may be very adept at getting what he wants, as his science has become much more specific.

**Cook:** The taste of the engineer, in other words, often is the thing that rules, rather than the intention of the composer.

**Curtin:** Unfortunately, this is true for the construction of an auditorium as well as for recording, and sometimes the engineer even controls live performances.

**Cook:** There's a major hall in New York where they constantly deny that they amplify and yet everyone knows that they do press the button to amplify.

**Curtin:** Well, I have not used that hall, or its button. Amplification techniques in the last 10 years have become so sophisticated that, as you have suggested, people can deny their existence and they can still be used with the greatest subtlety.

**Cook:** Have you had any experience with a thrust stage, an extension stage, and how that has affected sound in a given hall?

**Curtin:** I suppose it depends on what's over and around it. I'm thinking about the fact that sometimes on a wrap-around stage where the sides of the stage come over the pit in another direction, you can work on those projecting sides. If you still have a good arch overall, you can get wonderful sound. Occasionally, the apron of a stage which would seem to be outside the stage proper, picks up acoustically from the ceiling of the building or perhaps the overhang of the balcony. When that happens you take see the whole cast working its way down stage to often advantage of this, and everybody hesitates to go upstage. Certainly at the old City Opera one worked as far front as one could because it was pretty hopeless at the back of the stage. I do remember that at the Old Met there would be great congestion on certain areas of the stage because those seemed to be hot spots, and veterans would tip off the others so they had an important solo or duo or trio, you tried to get to the hot spot.

**Cook:** Have climate controls affected any house in which you sang?

**Curtin:** Yes, but before one gets into how it affects the house, let's discuss how it can affect the performer. This is something the people who build halls often don't think about. I think of one theater right now, a perfectly gorgeous one, all wood, one of the most beautiful instruments in the world, but its air conditioning system produced a hum. For a musician onstage, that hum could become maddening, a steady constant pitch. I remember in Tel Aviv, in their wonderful Mann Auditorium, the draft that came down across the front of the stage from the air-conditioning was so extraordinary, so Arctic, that Richard Tucker with whom I was singing grabbed me and said, "We're not staying here!" and off we went, until the hall was made more acceptable and not menacing to our vocal cords.

The other thing, of course, is its instrumental effect, largely on singers, though I imagine if it were severe it would affect horns and other instruments. If the hall is too cold, you get a nasty situation. The inside of your throat is warm and the back of your neck is cold, and this can cause phlegm. Gulping in cold air on a hot throat is guaranteed to be damaging. This could be a big problem for singers where again the air-conditioning is not subtle. On the other hand, there are halls which are beautifully air-conditioned and one is never aware of it.

**Cook:** Does opera always sound better in an opera house than in a multi-purpose hall?

**Curtin:** In Manchester, England, there has been a long tradition of using halls designed for multiple purposes for singers whose voices had to be heard. You see, their standard, their expectation was created long ago. On the other hand, there are halls where you could be heard has always been important.

**Cook:** There are some old halls that have been saved from the wrecker's ball, and from being converted, as the great old Boston Opera House was, into garage space.

**Curtin:** I think right off of places like Heinz Hall for the Pitts-

burgh Symphony. It's an old movie theater. And it's so exciting acoustically you can hardly hear it. Columbus, Ohio revived the old Ohio State movie hall and the Symphony Orchestra plays there. They can do opera there and it sounds wonderful. Certainly, that's been one of the more interesting revivals I've seen recently. The Gaietywitsch hall in Detroit was originally built for the Detroit Symphony, and it proved to be a gem. It had its heyday, then slowly was abandoned. Now all of a sudden, things are being booked into that hall again. It's a very exciting place.

**Cook:** Last year I think they had at least fifty concerts during the year, and each year it seems to increase. The pitful comment is that acoustically it is so superior to Ford Hall, which is the contemporary hall built in the downtown area for the Detroit Symphony.

**Curtin:** That's right. Unfortunately, we did lose Loew's Paradise Theater in the Bronx. Six or seven years ago, during the Metropolitan Opera in the Park series, the orchestra shell broke down, and instead of being in Van Cortlandt Park, we moved into Loew's Paradise Theater for Tosca. Now that theater was one of those great, heavenly gaudy things with statues and painted ceilings and heaven knows what, seating perhaps four thousand people. It had a great organ, and a light board that could take you through a summer day from dawn through night with every constellation in the Western Hemisphere visible overhead. The minute we began to make music in that place, we were so excited we could barely contain ourselves. Everybody's voice sounded much better than it had any place else we'd been, ever. The orchestra sound was superb, the house was full; sound obviously carried without any help from anybody except maybe the stars overhead to make us all feel romantic... one of the most beautiful acoustical situations in the world. And that it was a dream of mine that maybe once a month the Metropolitan would travel up to Loew's Paradise Theater and have "The Met in the Bronx." Alas, that never happened. The theater disappeared soon after; it became four separate movie theaters. I think that could have been a cultural gem for many uses in the greater New York area. That was a great pity.

**Cook:** Yes, and that was a great Tosca. Also, here in New Haven, there's so much that could be done with a viable theater if one existed. We all hope to save and revive the Shubert Theater. In that house, with its 1700-seat capacity, the acoustics are glorious.

**Curtin:** Maybe glorious is too strong, but they're very good. The Shubert was everybody's last out-of-town engagement before New York. Decades of great theatrical events happened at the Shubert. And everybody in the theater knew and loved the Shubert. As touring pre-Broadway became more costly, as downtowns became less safe and less appealing, theaters of this nature fell on evil days. I think that, across the United States, many inner-city theaters are going to be revived again, as people use the downtowns, and economically it becomes more feasible.

**Cook:** It seems to me that if that happens, we will have less and less nostalgia from critics and other supposed experts on

"the great singers of the past" whom they never heard, who sang in tiny, tiny theaters, and perhaps without the aid of mikes and we'll be able to discover all kinds of great singers of our day.

**Curtin:** There's something else I wanted to say about opera house design. Those who design opera houses frequently do not allot sufficient space to dressing and rehearsal rooms. I think that this is an area in which practical advice is terribly important. By practical advice, I mean from people who don't know a thing about architecture, probably, but who spend nearly twelve hours or more a day in the opera house. They know a lot about where dressing rooms ought to be, where storage rooms ought to be, where wardrobe ought to be. Many changes of costume have to be quick and effective, and you can't be running up and down stairs and all over the place for that. It's very important that architects apprise themselves of what it takes to run a show. Not all shows are the same, and I would expect that a conscientious architect ought to spend, let's say, two solid weeks in a repertory house watching the shows go on, in order to appreciate and fully understand the requirements around the stage. All too often the client really does not know what he wants. They have built auditoriums, but they haven't built any dressing rooms. For example, a wonderful auditorium where I sang in a mid-western city is a beautiful hall, grand stage, wonderful equipment, but no dressing rooms—not a single dressing room—except one floor down, and then there were only two big rooms, so that all the women—everybody as a matter of fact—dressed in one dressing room. That hall is St. Catherine's in St. Paul where the Minnesota Orchestra plays regularly now when it goes to St. Paul and where I sang with a wonderful young opera company.

And I think it's in Sarasota, there's a theater that is purple. I must say that the man who was running the concert series advised me months in advance when I was to sing a recital there that the interior was purple and dark blue, and I should be so advised because of my gown. Lots of impresarios are not that thoughtful; they never think to warn you. That was very useful. The hall is very beautiful on the inside, and it had acoustical panels. This was the school of Frank Lloyd Wright, although I don't know if it was his. I think Mrs. Wright had a lot to do with its interior decoration, at any rate. But obviously, the stage had almost no wing space and no back stage at all. It simply ended. And so, if you presented a theater work in there, you either had to make a false back to the stage, which is costly, or if you had an exit on one side and an entrance on the other, you had to go outdoors and come in on the other side. Now one can forgive this perhaps in a small young high school, some place where they never meant to have theater in the first place. But for an actual theater to be so designed as to have an unusable stage, for anything except entrances from one side is curious. Such faults happen sometimes when the client is unaware of what he's going to put inside.

**Cook:** Well, here's to full knowledge of such factors and here's to the reclaiming of the good old houses and the building of comparable new ones.

**Curtin:** We did not discuss pits. An orchestra pit, the deeper

the better, allows an orchestra to play at its best in proper relation and balance to the volume of sound on stage. This is fundamental in the building of an opera house. An opera house that has no acoustical advantage is not an opera house and it's impossible to make it better whether one sings well or badly.

**Cook:** Is lighting usually adequate?

**Curtin:** Lighting is something that grows more advanced all the time. Follow spots in the theater, for instance, are inescapable at this point, unless they are used for a specific dramatic purpose. Audience lighting depends on the performance. If one is going to the recital of a singer, it is important to have enough light so that people can see the program and follow translations. If it is another type of recital where program notes are not essential, then it is much nicer to have the house dark, so that one's concentration, by subtle lighting, is on the performers. This only enhances communication. Audience lighting in lesser houses across the country, is pretty primitive. You can either turn it on or you can turn it off, but there's not much in between. There ought to be much more versatile audience lighting than is generally found to date.

**Cook:** If you had the opportunity, would you change the design of opera houses in any way?

**Curtin:** What pleases one most is the thought that the sound carries well into a hall, that usually one can be seen from every place, that singers do not need amplification, that people do not have to sit behind posts, or in boxes in which they must crane their necks in one position all night long to see. Of course the location of an opera house is important.

**Cook:** Covent Garden is in a vegetable market.

**Curtin:** Yes, it always has been. Everybody loves it because it's there. It's a wonderful place. It's terrific to go there any day to rehearse and walk through the market. I would love to be consulted by anybody designing an opera house. I might have a lot of relevant things to say, that other people like me would also be saying, and maybe just the fact that we all said about the same things would be useful to designers.

I don't know that there's a perfect hall. Every hall, ideally, should have its own character. It will reflect architecturally, obviously, the people who designed it. One hopes that it reflects, first of all, an appreciation for the medium that it is to encompass. An opera house ought to show that it loves opera. Its general ambience and design should be one in which people are ready to be carried away by their imaginations, and by the reality of art.

The Chicago Opera House is so big and so barnlike that one loses the right ambience for theater. It takes a galvanizing production, I think, to suit that house. When the Metropolitan has gone on tour, and we have sung in some places that seat 12,000 people and you're amplified and you hear things three times 'round, then you have moved far away from anything that has to do with opera, or musical performance. You are simply into the circus.

**Cook:** Thank you.

## DESIGN BRIEFS

By Joen Shantz and Marjorieleine Menke Prince

### Funding Sources for Cultural Facilities

*Funding Sources for Cultural Facilities: Private and Federal Support for Capital Projects*, a revised version of the 1975 edition, is now available, from the Design Arts Program, NEA. Section I lists private sources of support for cultural facilities. Section II lists Federal sources of support for cultural facilities. The Agency giving money, with a description of each program's goals.

### Improvement to Federal Printing Program

A series of public meetings have been announced by Representative Frank Thompson, Jr., Chairman of the Joint Committee on Printing which will result in the updating of the Government Printing and Bidding Regulations issued by JCP.

These public meetings will include discussions and question-answer sessions on various aspects of the Government's printing program.

Interested persons should contact their regional GPO Printing Procurement Office, which will have an advance schedule of the meetings or the outcomes for meetings already held.

### American Institute of Architects' 1980 Honor Awards

"Energy-conscious and barrier-free designs figured significantly in the 13 buildings selected for The American Institute of Architects' 1980 Honor Awards, the nation's highest professional recognition of design excellence. The winners—seven current use and six extended use projects—range from a re-modeled passive solar residence in California to a restored, mixed-use 22 acre historic district in Massachusetts.

Virtually all of these projects are accessible to the handicapped and feature some energy-conserving techniques.

The Honor Awards Jury for Current Use considers new projects designed and completed within the past seven years, while the Honor Awards Jury for Extended Use selects projects of the past seven years which involve restoration, rehabilitation or adaptive use.

### American Society of Interior Designers

The 1980 ASID National Officers are Announced

Wallace R. Jonason FASID, President of Wallace Jonason Environmental Design in San Francisco, California is the 1980 National President. Jack Lowery FASID, is the National Vice President. President-elect for 1980 and will serve as National President for two years beginning in 1981, Martin Elnoff ASID, is the National Treasurer and Barbara Sauerbrei FASID is National Secretary.

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